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The life and opinions of  
John de Wycliffe

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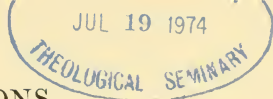
THE  
LIFE AND OPINIONS  
OF

JOHN DE WYCLIFFE, D.D.

Robert Vaughan

VOL. II.

AMS PRESS  
NEW YORK





THE  
LIFE AND OPINIONS  
OF  
JOHN DE WYCLIFFE, D.D.

ILLUSTRATED PRINCIPALLY FROM HIS

**Unpublished Manuscripts;**

WITH

A PRELIMINARY VIEW OF THE PAPAL SYSTEM, AND OF THE STATE OF  
THE PROTESTANT DOCTRINE IN EUROPE,

TO THE

COMMENCEMENT OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

BY

ROBERT VAUGHAN.

VOL. II.

SECOND EDITION,

MUCH IMPROVED.

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"Quod si deficiant vires, audacia certè  
Laus erit; in magis et voluisse sat est."  
PROPERTIUS.

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# THE LIFE OF WYCLIFFE.

## CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN AND EFFECTS OF THE PAPAL SCHISM.—WYCLIFFE'S TRACT "ON  
"THE SCHISM OF THE POPES," AND OTHER REFERENCES TO THAT EVENT.  
—HIS WORK "ON THE TRUTH AND MEANING OF SCRIPTURE,"—HIS  
SICKNESS AT OXFORD, AND RECOVERY.—IMPORTANCE ATTACHED BY HIM  
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ILLUSTRATING HIS MANNER OF EXPOSING THE ERRORS AND DISORDERS OF  
THE ECCLESIASTICAL SYSTEM—OF INCULCATING THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE—THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT—THE DOCTRINES PECULIAR TO  
THE GOSPEL—AND THE VARIOUS OBLIGATIONS, AND THE MEANS CON-  
DUCTING, TO RELIGIOUS DEVOTEDNESS.

THE residence of the pontiffs during seventy CHAP. I.  
years at Avignon, was described by the Italians  
as a second Babylonish captivity. That capti-  
vity, if such it may be called, had indeed a ten-  
dency to moderate the papal claims; but it was  
far from being the most serious feature of that  
disgrace which accompanied the representatives  
of St. Peter on returning to the ancient seat of  
their authority. On the death of Gregory the  
eleventh, in 1378, the cardinals assembled to elect  
his successor; but the Roman populace, aware  
that three-fourths of the conclave were French-  
men, and indignant that the vacant honour had

Origin and  
effects of  
the papal  
schism.

CHAP.  
I. — been so frequently conferred on ecclesiastics of that nation, gathered tumultuously around the place of meeting, and uttered the most alarming menaces with a view to secure the suffrage of the electors in favour of an Italian. The cardinals trembled for their safety, and immediately pronounced Bartholomew de Pregnano, a Neapolitan, and then archbishop of Bari, as the object of their choice. The new pontiff assumed the name of Urban the sixth; but his conduct soon became such as to exasperate his enemies and alienate his friends. From this cause, or from national partialities, some of the leading cardinals retired from Rome to Anagni; and at Fondi, a city of Naples, they chose their brother of Geneva to be the successor of Gregory, and he was immediately proclaimed as Clement the seventh. To justify this bold measure, it was pleaded that the election of Urban was the result of intimidation, and accordingly invalid. France, and her allies, including Spain, Sicily, and Cyprus, acknowledged the authority of Clement; while England, and the rest of Europe, adhered to that of Urban.<sup>1</sup> “And which of these two,” observes Mosheim, “is to be considered as the true and “lawful pope, is to this day matter of doubt, nor “will the records and writings alleged by the “contending parties enable us to adjust that point “with any certainty.”<sup>2</sup>

But whatever were the *merits* of this controversy, its *effects* were by no means doubtful. Through the next half century, the church had two or three different heads at the same time;

<sup>1</sup> Mosheim, iii. 326, 327.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

each of the contending popes forming plots, and thundering out anathemas against their competitors. “The distress and calamity of these times” is said to have been “beyond all power of description; for not to insist on the perpetual contentions and wars between the factions of the several popes, by which multitudes lost their fortunes and lives, all sense of religion was extinguished in most places, and profligacy arose to a most scandalous excess. The clergy, while they vehemently contended which of the reigning popes was the true successor of Christ, were so excessively corrupt as to be no longer studious to keep up even the appearance of religion or decency; and in consequence of all this, many plain, well-meaning people, who concluded that no one could possibly partake of eternal life unless united with the vicar of Christ, were overwhelmed with doubt, and were plunged into the deepest distress of mind.”<sup>3</sup> And thus, also, it was, that multitudes were prepared to doubt whether the supremacy claimed by the pontiffs, since it could become involved in such fearful uncertainty, could really be an article of faith or discipline so momentous as had been commonly supposed. Wycliffe, whose escape from the vengeance of the clergy, must be attributed in a great degree to the distractions occasioned by this event, was fully aware of the aid which it might be made to confer on his efforts as a reformer.

The controversy had no sooner commenced, than he published a tract intitled,—“On the

Wycliffe's tract, “On the Schism of the Popes,”

<sup>3</sup> Mosheim, iii. 328.

CHAP. "Schism of the Popes,"<sup>4</sup> in which he adverts to  
I. — this dispute as having divided the hierarchy against itself, and as presenting a powerful inducement to attempt the destruction of those laws and customs, which had served so greatly to corrupt the christian priesthood, and to afflict the whole christian community. The endowments of the church, whether claimed by the pontiffs, or by the national clergy, he names as a principal cause of the degeneracy of both; and the property entrusted to the stewardship of churchmen, he affirms to be capable, generally, of a more just, and of a far less dangerous application. To effect this new appropriation of the wealth, which it is said had been frequently ill acquired, and as frequently worse employed, the appeal made is not to the passions of the few or the many, but to the sacred responsibilities of the sovereigns and rulers of Christendom. And that this exhortation might not be in vain, he renews his attack upon those superstitions from which the undue influence of the clergy had derived its being and continuance. Instead of conceding that the power of the clergy, or of the pope, over the disembodied spirit, must ever regulate its destiny, he contends, that when correctly exercised, it is merely ministerial; and that inasmuch as the decisions of these men were frequently opposed to moral propriety, and to the known will of God, they were frequently to be viewed as the mere assumptions of human weakness or passion, from which no evil should be

<sup>4</sup> MS. Trinity College, Dublin, class C. tab. 3, No. 12. p. 193—208.

apprehended. His advice, therefore, is, “Trust CHAP.  
I.  
“we in the help of Christ on this point, for he  
“hath begun already to help us graciously, in  
“that he hath clove the head of Antichrist, and  
“made the two parts fight against each other.  
“For it is not doubtful, that the sin of the popes,  
“which hath been so long continued, hath  
“brought in this division.” Should the rival  
pontiffs continue to lance their anathemas against  
each other, or should either prevail, a serious  
wound is believed to be inflicted, and it is urged  
accordingly, that “emperors, and kings, should  
“help in this cause, to maintain God’s law, to  
“recover the heritage of the church, and to de-  
“stroy the foul sins of clerks, saving their per-  
“sons. Thus should peace be established, and  
“simony destroyed.” As to the infallibility of  
the popes, he remarks, that there is nothing in  
the suffrage of princes or cardinals to impart any  
such attribute to erring man. On this point, he  
observes, “the children of the fiend should learn  
“their logic, and their philosophy well, lest they  
“prove heretical by a false understanding of the  
“law of Christ.” Except the person elected to an  
ecclesiastical office shall possess the virtues which  
bespeak him a servant of Christ, the most vaunted  
forms of investing him with that dignity are  
declared to be vain. Among heresies, he affirms,  
that “there is no greater, than for a man to  
“believe that he is absolved from his sin, if he  
“give money, or because a priest layeth his  
“hand on the head, and saith I absolve thee.  
“For thou must be sorrowful in thy heart,” he  
adds, “or else God absolveth thee not.” In the

CHAP. same treatise, the necessity of confession to a  
 I. priest is denied no less distinctly than the received doctrine on the power of the keys. And having thus wrested the weapons from the hands of churchmen, which had been wielded with so much success against human liberty, he calls upon the secular authorities to attempt the long-needed reformation of the ecclesiastical body, both in its head and its members.

Other references to that event.

Nor was it in this production only that these bold sentiments were uttered. In his writings from this period to his death, the lust of dominion, the avarice, and the cruelty, discovered by these rival pontiffs, in prosecuting their different claims, are all placed in fearless contrast with the maxims and spirit of Christ and his apostles. "Simon Magus," he observes, "never laboured more in the work of "simony, than do these priests. And so God "would no longer suffer the fiend to reign in only "one such priest, but for the sin which they had "done, made division among two, so that men, in "Christ's name, may the more easily overcome "them both." Evil, it is remarked, is weakened by diffusion, no less than good; "and this now "moveth poor priests to speak heartily in this "matter, for when God will bless the church, but "men are slothful, and will not labour, their sloth "is to be rebuked for many reasons." In his parochial discourses, delivered to his flock at Lutterworth, the schism of the papacy is frequently adverted to, and always in a manner tending to deliver men from the fear of the priest,



and, at the same time, to impress them with the fear of God.<sup>6</sup> CHAP.  
I.

It was at this period that the reformer completed a work, "On the Truth and Meaning of Scripture," the most extended, if not the most systematically arranged, of all his productions. A copy of this treatise was in the possession of our venerable martyrologist, and appears to have been considered the only one extant. That at present in the Bodleian library was formerly the property of Dr. Allen, a great admirer of Wycliffe, and a diligent collector of his manuscripts. It is without a title page, and a few leaves from the commencement are lost: the remaining portion of the volume, extending to more than six hundred pages, is in good preservation. Besides this copy, the only one hitherto mentioned in the printed catalogues of the reformer's writings, there is another in the library at Trinity College, Dublin. This is complete, and in an excellent state. The work itself has required this particular notice, not only from its extent, but from its character, as embodying almost every sentiment peculiar to the mind of our reformer. The supreme authority of holy writ; the unalienable right of private judgment; all the branches of clerical power; the sacraments of the church; together with almost every article of moral obli-

Notice of  
his work  
"On the  
Truth and  
Meaning of  
Scripture."

<sup>6</sup> Thus in one of his homilies (on Rom. xiii.) it is affirmed of the pontiff, "that he is not on Christ's side, who put his soul for his sheep, but on the side of antichrist, who putteth many souls for his pride. This man feedeth not the sheep of Christ, as Christ thrice commanded

"Peter; but spoileth them, and slayeth them, and leadeth them many wrong ways." The same contrast is pursued in the homily on John, Ep. i. c. ii. and much more at length in the treatise "On the Seven Deadly Sins."—MS. Bibl. Bodl.

CHAP. I. gation, may be found largely discussed in this volume. The author of the Acts and Monuments intended giving it to the world; and we may regret that his purpose was not accomplished. Were this the only work preserved from the pen of Wycliffe, it would alone be sufficient, to merit for its author the first place among the intrepid advocates of truth and piety in the annals of this country.<sup>7</sup>

His sickness  
at Oxford.

But the labour of producing such compositions, and the excitements inseparable from the restless hostilities of his enemies, so shook his frame, at this period, as to threaten his speedy dissolution,—and, in truth, to lay the foundation of the malady which a few years later was the occasion of his death. Such also was the force of religious prejudice in the fourteenth century, that his old antagonists, the mendicants, conceived it next to impossible, that an heresiarch so notorious, should find himself near a future world without the most serious apprehensions of approaching vengeance. But while thus conscious of their own rectitude, and certain that the dogmas of the reformer had arisen from the suggestions of the great enemy, some advantages to their cause were anticipated, could the dying culprit be induced to utter any recantation of his published opinions. Wycliffe was in Oxford when this sickness arrested his activity, and confined him to his chamber. From the four orders of friars, four doctors, who were also called regents, were gravely deputed to wait

<sup>7</sup> MS. Bibl. Bodl. Rotulæ in Archi.  
A. 3021, 32. MS. Trinity College,  
Dublin, class C. tab. 1. No. 24 De

*Sensu et Veritate Scripturæ*, is the  
title given to the work by Fox,  
i. 583.

on their expiring enemy ; and to these the same number of civil officers, called senators of the city, and aldermen of the wards, were added. When this embassy entered the apartment of the rector of Lutterworth, he was seen stretched on his bed. Some kind wishes were first expressed as to his better health, and the blessing of a speedy recovery. It was presently suggested, that he must be aware of the many wrongs which the whole mendicant brotherhood had sustained from his attacks, especially in his sermons, and in certain of his writings ; and as death was now, apparently, about to remove him, it was sincerely hoped, that he would not conceal his penitence, but distinctly revoke whatever he had said tending to the injury of those holy fraternities. The sick man remained silent, and motionless, until this address was concluded. He then beckoned his servants to raise him in his bed ; and fixing his eyes on the persons assembled, summoned all his remaining strength, as he exclaimed aloud, “ I shall not die but live, and shall again declare the evil deeds of the friars ! ” The doctors, and their attendants, retreated in mortification and dismay, and they lived to feel the truth of the reformer’s prediction ; nor will it be easy to imagine another scene, more characteristic of the parties composing it, or of the times with which it is connected.<sup>8</sup>

While the writings of Wycliffe were thus performing their part on the mind of his countrymen, it was not merely his divinity lectures, but the whole of his pulpit instructions, which were studiously directed to the same object. It is known

His sentiments with respect to preaching.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis, c. iv. 82. Bale, 469, &c.

CHAP. that in the fourteenth century, the exercises of  
 I. public worship consisted of little beside that species of mechanical occupation which an apostle describes as “bodily exercise,” and as “profiting little.” These, however, and that domestic ministration of the sacraments, to which the most feeble or depraved among the clergy were deemed fully competent, were generally considered as securing to the worshipper whatever it was the design of christianity to bestow. As the consequence of questioning this theory, and at length of wholly denying the efficacy of such services, except as accompanied by appropriate perception and feeling on the part of the persons engaged in them, was the importance attached by our reformer to the office of preaching. No language can be more forcible, than that in which the sacred writers speak of the preaching of the cross, as the divinely appointed means of bringing the nations to the obedience of the gospel; and in proportion as men have imbibed the spirit of primitive piety, in any subsequent age, has been the prominence assigned to this department of ministerial duty. Among the means which had induced our Saxon ancestors to renounce their ancient idolatry, preaching held a conspicuous place;<sup>9</sup> but from that period to the age of Wycliffe, it fell into comparative disuse in the practice of the English clergy. Grossteste deplored this fact, and with a view to supply the deficiency, became a zealous patron of the preaching friars. He lived,

<sup>9</sup> This was the service to which Aidan, the apostle of Northumbria, devoted his life. (Bede, c. v.) In his first attempt to address the pagan

Saxons, Oswald, the sovereign, acted as his interpreter. By the Scottish missionaries, in general, the same importance was attached to this function.

however, to regret that remedy, as being even CHAP.  
I.  
worse than the disease.<sup>10</sup> Yet so powerful were ———  
the effects of preaching, even in the hands of the mendicants, that had not their rapid success produced so speedy a corruption of their institute, the parochial clergy, by limiting their official services to the prescribed repetitions from the mass book, must have lost the whole of their influence over the mind of the people.<sup>11</sup> Wycliffe saw this state of things, but while he complained of the indolence and the vices of the secular clergy, as leading to the prevalent neglect of this exercise, his boldest censures were reserved for the fraternities, in whose labours he could discern nothing but the abuses of the function, which they had assumed as their peculiar province. The itinerant character of their ministry could hardly have displeased him, as he often defended the same practice in his followers. It was their substituting “fables—chronicles of the world—and stories from the battle of Troy”—in the place of the gospel; and the religious delusions imposed by them on the rich and the poor, to raise themselves into distinction, and to gratify their avarice and sensuality, which filled him with so restless an abhorrence of “these new orders.” Instead, however, of imbibing a disgust of preaching, from seeing it thus perverted, the reformer appears to have judged only the more favourably of its power as the means of reformation, if rightly applied. Possessed himself of such learning as had aided the mendicants in acquiring their reputation, he was also a proficient in that power of oral com-

<sup>10</sup> Paris, 873.<sup>11</sup> See Prelim. View, c. iii. sect. i.

CHAP. I. munication which was their special faculty. In Wycliffe, the severity of the cloister was associated with the learning of the college, and with that power of interesting the understanding and affections of ordinary minds, which is rarely found in such combinations. In secret, he mourned over the degraded state of his country, and over that immense expenditure of wealth in favour of the clergy, which served only to perpetuate their secular character, and to strengthen every cord of the national thralldom; and to contribute something toward the recovery of his native land from this state of gloomy bondage, was the object to which the acquirements, and the energies, of his generous nature were readily devoted.

*His laborious attention to the office of preaching.*

We know not the number of sermons composed by Wycliffe, but that copies of nearly three hundred should have escaped the effort which was so long made to effect the destruction of whatever his pen had produced, is sufficient to assure us, that his labours as a preacher were abundant.<sup>12</sup> His zeal was not of that spurious kind which assails the vast only, or which expatiates on the great and the future, at the cost of every nearer and more humble department of duty. Accordingly, to appreciate the character of the English reformer, it is necessary to view him, not only as advocating the claims of his sovereign before the delegates of the pontiff; as solving the questions which perplexed the English parliament; or as

<sup>12</sup> The copy which I have principally consulted, is that of the British Museum.—Bib. Reg. xviii. b. ix. Several copies, more or less perfect, and written, in some instances, before

the close of the fourteenth century, and in others later, are still extant in the Museum, and in the libraries of Oxford, Cambridge, and Dublin.

challenging the most intellectual of the age to discussions on the truth of his acknowledged doctrine. To all this he added the diligent performance of those less imposing duties which devolve on the parish priest. It was no novelty to see the venerable Wycliffe in a village pulpit, surrounded by his rustic auditory ; or in the lowest hovel of the poor, fulfilling his office at the bedside of the sick and the dying, whether freeman or slave. It was over a sphere thus extended, that his genius and benevolence were diffused. Previous to this period, he had required his disciples to unite with the devotions of the sabbath, a regular attention to the wants of the afflicted and the poor. The public exercises of that day being devoutly performed, the christian man is enjoined “ to visit those who  
 “ are sick, or who are in trouble, especially those  
 “ whom God hath made needy by age, or by other  
 “ sickness, as the feeble, the blind, and the lame,  
 “ who are in poverty. These thou shalt relieve  
 “ with thy goods, after thy power, and after their  
 “ need, for thus biddeth the gospel.<sup>13</sup>” It is but just to suppose, that the preacher, who, under such circumstances, was forward to inculcate these and similar offices of domestic charity, was himself accustomed to conform to them. But his favourite doctrine, which defined true charity as “ beginning at the love of man’s spirit,” was so far extended, as to induce him to believe, that “ men  
 “ who love not the souls, love little the bodies  
 “ of their neighbours ;” and hence the work of christian instruction is described, as “ the best

CHAP.  
I.

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<sup>13</sup> MS. Exposition of the Decalogue, Cotton. Titus, D. xix. 122.



CHAP. "service that man may do for his brother."<sup>14</sup>

I.

Priests who are found "in taverns, and hunting, " and playing at their tables," instead of "learning God's law, and preaching," are accordingly denounced as "foulest traitors," since among the duties of their office, "most of all is the preaching " of the gospel; for this Christ enjoined on his " disciples more than any other; by this he conquered the world out of the fiend's hand; and " whosoever he be that can but bring priests to " act thus, hath authority from God, and merit in " his deed."<sup>15</sup>

Wycliffe's reasonings in favour of preaching.

As the impression made by Wycliffe, and his followers, on the mind of their contemporaries, may be attributed, in a great degree, to their peculiar sentiments on the relative importance of preaching, it will not perhaps be uninteresting to the reader, to notice the statements and reasonings of the reformer, on this point, more at length. "I. The highest service that men may attain to " on earth," is said to be, to "preach the word " of God. This service falls peculiarly to priests, " and therefore God more straightly demands it " of them. Hereby should they produce children " to God, and that is the end for which God has " wedded the church. Lovely it might be, to have " a son that were lord of this world, but fairer " much it were to have a son in God, who, as a " member of holy church, shall ascend to heaven! " And for this cause, Jesus Christ left other works, " and occupied himself mostly in preaching; and " thus did his apostles, and for this God loved

<sup>14</sup> Homily on Philippians, c. iii.

<sup>15</sup> Epistola ad Simplices Sacerdotes.

“ them. II. Also, he does best, who best keeps CHAP.  
I.  
“ the commandments of God. Now the first  
“ commandment of the second table bids us ho-  
“ nour our elders, as our father and mother. But  
“ this honour should be first given to holy church,  
“ for she is the mother we should most love, and  
“ for her, as our faith teaches, Christ died. The  
“ church, however, is honoured most by the  
“ preaching of God’s word, and hence this is the  
“ best service that priests may render unto God.  
“ Thus a woman said to Christ, that the womb  
“ which bare him, and the breasts which he had  
“ sucked, should be blessed of God ; but Christ  
“ said, rather should that man be blessed, who  
“ should hear the words of God, and keep them.  
“ And this should preachers do more than other  
“ men, and this word should they keep more than  
“ any other treasure. Idleness in this office is  
“ to the church its greatest injury, producing  
“ most the children of the fiend, and sending  
“ them to his court. III. Also, that service is the  
“ best, which has the worst opposed to it. But  
“ the opposite of preaching, is of all things the  
“ worst ; and therefore preaching, if it be well  
“ done, is the best of all. And accordingly,  
“ Jesus Christ, when he ascended into heaven,  
“ commanded it especially to all his apostles, to  
“ preach the gospel freely to every man. So also,  
“ when Christ spoke last with Peter, he bade him  
“ thrice, as he loved him, to feed his sheep ; and  
“ this would not a wise shepherd have done, had  
“ he not himself loved it well. In this stands the  
“ office of the spiritual shepherd. As the bishop  
“ of the temple hindered Christ, so is he hindered

CHAP. "by the hindering of this deed. Therefore Christ  
 I. — "told them, that at the day of doom, Sodom and  
 "Gomorrah should better fare than they. And  
 "thus, if our bishops preach not in their own  
 "persons, and hinder true priests from preaching,  
 "they are in the sin of the bishops who killed  
 "the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>16</sup>

So far then was the reformer from confiding in the sacraments of the church, as certainly connected with a participation in the mercies of redemption. Man he considers, as a being endowed with reason and with passions, and he attempts the discipline of his affections, only by bringing the light of divine truth to bear upon his understanding. This, in the language of the church of Rome, was to ensnare the unwary, by an artful appeal to the vanity and self-confidence of the human mind. But if there be truth in religion, or nature, intellectual culture is the only medium through which the moral improvement of man should be contemplated. The faculties of his being, and the known will of the Deity, announce him as accountable; and the theory which serves at all to weaken the feeling of this accountableness, must be of murderous tendency.

There is another motive, however, from which objection to the office of preaching has sometimes arisen. To have imitated the zeal of Wycliffe, on this point, would have required a different faculty from what was necessary to go through the usual routine of parish duty. The class of men, who were satisfied with their ability for such performances, and still more the inmates of con-

<sup>16</sup> MS. *Contra Fratres Bibl. Bodl. Archi. A. 83, p. 19, 20.*

vents, would affect to be astonished at the weakness, or the novelty, of the reformer's opinions, respecting a function, which the care of the church had rendered almost superfluous, which had ever been but too much allied to ostentation, and pregnant with no small danger to the peace and unity of the christian commonwealth. It is thus he reasons with such objectors: "When true men teach, that by the law of God, and wit, and reason, each priest is bound to do his utmost to preach the gospel of Christ, the fiend beguileth hypocrites to excuse him from this service by teaching a feigned contemplative life;—and urging, that since that is the best, and they may not do both, they are needed, from their love of God, to leave the preaching of the gospel to live in contemplation. But see now the hypocrisy and falsehood of this. Our faith teaches us, that since Christ was God, and might not err, he taught and did the best life for priests; yet Christ preached the gospel, and charged all his apostles and disciples to go and preach the gospel to all men. The best life then for priests, in this world, is to teach and preach the gospel. God also teacheth in the old law, that the office of a priest is to shew to the people their sins. But as each priest is a prophet by his order, according to St. Gregory on the Gospels, it is then the office of each to preach and to proclaim the sins of the people; and in this manner shall each priest be an angel of God, as holy writ affirms. Also Christ, and John the Baptist, left the desert, and preached the gospel to their death. To do this, therefore,

CHAP. " is the greatest charity, or else they were out of  
I. ———. " charity, or at least imperfect in it; and that  
" may hardly be, since the one was God; and  
" since no man, after Christ, hath been holier  
" than the Baptist."

" Also, the holy prophet, Jeremiah, hallowed in  
" his mother's womb, might not be excused from  
" preaching by his love of contemplation, but was  
" charged of God to proclaim the sins of the  
" people, and to suffer hard pain for doing so; and  
" so were all the prophets of God. Ah! Lord,  
" since Christ and John, and all the prophets,  
" were compelled by charity to come out of the  
" desert to preach to the people, and to leave  
" their solitary prayers, how dare these pretend-  
" ing heretics say it is better to be still, and to  
" pray over their own feigned ordinances, than to  
" preach the gospel of Christ? Lord! what  
" cursed spirit of falsehood moveth priests to close  
" themselves within stone walls for all their life,  
" since Christ commanded all his apostles and  
" priests to go into all the world, and to preach  
" the gospel? Certainly they are open fools, and  
" do plainly against the gospel; and if they  
" continue in this error, are accursed of God, as  
" perilous deceivers, and heretics. For in the  
" best part of the pope's law, it is said, that each  
" man who cometh to the priesthood, taketh on  
" him the office of a beadle, or a crier, to go  
" before doomsday, and to cry to the people their  
" sins, and the vengeance of God; and since men  
" are holden heretics who do against the pope's  
" law, are not those priests heretics, who refuse  
" to preach the gospel of Christ, and compel other

“ true men to leave the preaching of it? All laws CHAP.  
 “ opposed to this service, are opposed to God’s 1.  
 “ law, and reason and charity, and for the main-  
 “ tenance of pride and covetousness in Antichrist’s  
 “ worldly clerks.”<sup>17</sup>

To those who allege from the gospel, that Magdalene chose the better part, in preferring a contemplative to an active life, it is replied, that the quotation might have some pertinence, if priests were women, and if no command opposed to a life of solitude and uselessness could be found in scripture. The result, indeed, of the reasonings commonly adopted on this subject, is said to be, “ that Christ, when in this world, chose  
 “ the life least suited to it, and that he has obliged  
 “ all his priests to forsake the better and take  
 “ the worse. It is thus,” he adds, “ these de-  
 “ ceivers put error on Jesus Christ. \* \* \* Prayer,”  
 it is cautiously affirmed, “ is good, but not so  
 “ good as preaching ; and, accordingly, in preach-  
 “ ing, and also in praying, in the giving of sacra-  
 “ ments, the learning of the law of God, and the  
 “ rendering of a good example by purity of life,  
 “ in these should stand the life of a priest.”<sup>18</sup>  
 Such were the opinions of Wycliffe with respect to preaching, as compared with the other duties of the christian minister, and from his adherence to these arose much of his efficiency as a reformer. Opinions so true, so practical, and so plainly stated, could not have been reiterated in vain ; and we find them creating the class of

<sup>17</sup> MS. Of a Feigned Contemplative  
 Life, &c. Trinity College, Dublin,  
 class C. tab. 3. No. 12.

<sup>18</sup> MS. Contra Fratres, Bibl. Bodl.  
 Arch A. 83.

CHAP. men, called by the rector of Lutterworth, “poor  
 I. ——— “priests;”—persons, whose itinerant preaching, we shall presently see, was laboriously directed to discredit the superstitions, and to advance the piety of their countrymen.

Methods of  
 preaching.

While such was the place assigned by the reformer to the office of preaching, it may be proper to remark, that to the commencement of the thirteenth century, two methods of performing this service had prevailed. These were technically called, “declaring,” and “postillating.” According to the former, the preacher commenced, by announcing the subject on which he meant to discourse, and proceeded to deliver, what in modern language would be considered an oration, or an essay, rather than a sermon. To postillate, was to commence with reading a portion of scripture, and then taking its parts, in the order of the writer, to offer such remarks upon them, as were fitted to explain their meaning, and secure their application. To the latter method, which is the same with what is still called lecturing, or exposition, another was added about this period, and one by which the ancient practice of declaring was ere long nearly abolished, and the far better custom of postillating was rendered much less frequent. The sacred text had been recently divided into its present order of chapters; and the logic to which the schoolmen were so devoted, suggested the selecting of some brief portion of scripture as the basis of a sermon, and also that the matters introduced to illustrate the doctrine or duty to be discussed, should be divided and subdivided, in the manner still so generally adopted



by preachers.<sup>19</sup> The sacred writings were too highly valued by Wycliffe, to be dispensed with as the obvious foundation of the instructions delivered by him from the pulpit. This motive, also, which led him to avoid the practice of declaring, appears to have rendered him doubtful concerning the utility of the new scholastic mode of teaching, and to have determined his general preference of the expository method.

His compositions for the pulpit, therefore, which have descended to us, are nearly all of the class described as "postils." They are also the production of different periods, through the interval from 1376, when the writer became rector of Lutterworth, to the close of 1384. In some instances, they consist of little more than a few brief notes, appended to a vernacular translation of the lesson for the day, in others they approach nearer to the length of a modern sermon. But, when filling several closely-written folio pages, we know not how far to regard them as exhibiting any thing beyond the spirit or the general manner of the reformer's efforts as a preacher. That he wholly restricted

CHAP.  
I.

Character  
of his  
sermons.

<sup>19</sup> Wood i. 58, 59. Knighton, col. 2430. The former writer has introduced friar Bacon, as bitterly lamenting the prevalence of the scholastic methods of preaching, and as accounting for its adoption in a way not very honourable to the contemporary clergy. "The greatest part of our prelates," he observes, "having but little knowledge in divinity, and having been little used to preaching in their youth, when they become bishops, and are sometimes obliged to preach, are under a necessity of

"of certain novices, who have invented a new way of preaching, by endless divisions and quibblings, in which there is neither sublimity of style, nor depth of wisdom, but much childish trifling and folly, unsuitable to the dignity of the pulpit. May God," he exclaims, "banish this conceited and artificial way of preaching out of his church, for it will never do any good, nor elevate the hearts of the hearers to any thing that is good or excellent."

Henry's Hist. viii. 182—185.

CHAP. himself, in any case, to what he had written, is  
I. — improbable, from his known facility of extemporaneous communication, and from the fact that these preparations for the pulpit, sometimes resemble the mere specifications of topics, rather than any regular discussion of them. Nor is it certain, indeed, that their publication was the act of the reformer, or at all anticipated by him. They contain nothing opposed to the supposition of their having been collected and published after his decease; and the character of Purvey, his curate at that period, renders it certain that a careful effort would be made to preserve every such document. But through whatever medium the copies of these discourses have been transmitted, we may safely conclude that what they contain was delivered to the people of Lutterworth by their rector; and there is scarcely a peculiarity of opinion adopted by Wycliffe, the nature, or the progress of which, might not be illustrated from these voluminous remains. It should also be stated, that these compositions are strictly of a popular character. References to abstruse or speculative questions frequently arise, either from the import of the text, or from the reasonings suggested by it; but these are almost invariably dismissed, that “things more “profiting” might become the matter of attention. Through the whole, the multiplied corruptions of the hierarchy are vigorously assailed, as forming the great barrier to all religious improvement. The social obligations of men are also frequently discussed, and traced with a cautious firmness to the authority of the scriptures; while the doctrines of the gospel are uniformly exhibited, as declaring

the guilt, and the spiritual infirmities of men, to be such as to render the atonement of Christ their only way of pardon, and the grace of the divine Spirit their only hope of purity. A few extracts will farther assist the reader in judging of the manner in which the reformer discharged the duties of the humble but important office of village preacher.

CHAP.  
1.

It is thus he addressed his parishioners, on the obligation of priests, to extend their services as preachers to the village and the hamlet, and to the most scattered portions of the community.

“ The gospel telleth us the duty which falls to all the disciples of Christ, and also telleth us how priests, both high and low, should occupy themselves in the church of God, and in serving him. And first, Jesus himself did indeed the lessons which he taught. The gospel relates how Jesus went about in the places of the country, both great and small, as in cities and castles, or small towns, and this to teach us to profit generally unto men, and not to forbear to preach to a people because they are few, and our name may not, in consequence, be great. For we should labour for God, and from him hope for our reward. There is no doubt, that Christ went into small uplandish towns, as to Bethphage, and Cana in Galilee; for Christ went to all those places where he wished to do good. And he laboured not thus for gain, for he was not smitten with pride or with covetousness.”<sup>20</sup>

In a subsequent discourse, he remarks, that “ it was ever the manner of Jesus to speak the

His mode of treating the questions of reform from the pulpit.

<sup>20</sup> Homilies, Bib. Reg. xviii. b. ix. 134.

CHAP. I. “ words of God, wherever he knew that they  
 ——— “ would be profitable to others who heard them ;  
 “ and hence Christ often preached, now at meat,  
 “ and now at supper, and indeed at whatever time  
 “ it was convenient for others to hear him.”<sup>21</sup> It  
 is accordingly regretted, that the “craft of the  
 “fiend” had given that form to the jurisdiction of  
 the prelates, which greatly prevented good men  
 in their attempts to imitate those retired efforts in  
 the cause of humanity and religion, which appear  
 so lovely in the history of the Saviour. While  
 Hebrew priests admitted the Master to their syna-  
 gogues, the successors of the apostles are said to  
 exclude his servants from their churches.<sup>22</sup>

In an exposition of the epistle read on the  
 third Sunday after advent, he thus proceeds ;—  
 “ Let a man so guess of us, as of the ministers of  
 “ God, and as dispensers of his services. And if  
 “ each man should be found true in this matter,  
 “ priests, both high and low, should be found  
 “ more true. But most foul is the failure and  
 “ the sin of priests in this respect. As if ashamed  
 “ to appear as the servants of Christ, the pope  
 “ and his bishops show the life of emperors, and  
 “ of the lordly in the world, and not the living of  
 “ Christ. But since Christ hated such things,  
 “ they give us no room to guess them to be the  
 “ ministers of Christ. And so they fail in the  
 “ first lesson which Paul teacheth in this scrip-  
 “ ture. Lord ! what good doth the idle talk of the  
 “ pope, who must be called of men most blessed  
 “ father, and bishops most reverend men, while  
 “ their life is discordant from that of Christ ? In

<sup>21</sup> Hom. Bib. Reg. p. 169

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 131.

“ so taking of these names, they show that they  
 “ are on the fiend’s side, and children of the father  
 “ of falsehood. After St. Gregory, the pope may  
 “ say, that he is the servant of the servants of  
 “ God, but his life reverseth his name; for he  
 “ faileth to follow Christ, and is not the dispenser  
 “ of the services which God hath bidden, but de-  
 “ parteth from this service to that lordship which  
 “ emperors have bestowed. And thus, all the  
 “ services of the church, which Christ hath ap-  
 “ pointed to his priests, are turned aside, so that  
 “ if men will take heed to that service which  
 “ Christ hath thus limited, it is all turned upside  
 “ down, and hypocrites are become rulers.”<sup>23</sup>

But it would have been of small service to have shown that the ruling clergy were little worthy of the regard which their titles claimed for them, unless some protection could be afforded from the usual consequences of clerical displeasure. To this point the remaining portion of the sermon distinctly relates. The apostle is noticed as affirming, “ that in his case it was a small thing  
 “ to be judged of man’s judgment;” and from this it is observed, “ that men should not suppose  
 “ themselves injured by the blind judgment of  
 “ men, since God will judge all things, whether  
 “ to good or evil. Paul therefore taketh little  
 “ heed to the judgment that man judgeth, for  
 “ he knew well, from the scriptures, that if God  
 “ judgeth thus, then man’s judgment must stand,  
 “ and not else. Thus there are two days of  
 “ judgment, the day of the Lord, and man’s  
 “ day. The day of the Lord is the day of doom,

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

CHAP. “ when he shall judge all manner of men ; the  
I. — “ day of man is now present, when man judgeth,  
“ and by the law of man. Now every present  
“ judgment must be reversed, if it ought reverseth  
“ reason. But at the day of doom, all shall stand  
“ according to the judgment of God. That is the  
“ day of the Lord, because then all shall be as he  
“ will, and nothing shall reverse his judgment ;  
“ and St. Paul therefore saith, ‘ Judge nothing  
“ before the time, until the time of the Lord come,  
“ the which shall light the hidden things of dark-  
“ ness, and shall make known the counsels of the  
“ heart.’—And this moveth many men to think  
“ day and night upon the law of God, for that  
“ leadeth to a knowledge of what is God’s will,  
“ and without a knowledge of this should man do  
“ nothing, and this also moveth men to forsake  
“ the judgment of man. To St. Paul, the truth  
“ of holy writ, which is the will of the first Judge,  
“ was enough until doomsday. Stewards of the  
“ church, therefore, should not judge merely ac-  
“ cording to their own will, but always accord-  
“ ing to the law of God, and in things of which  
“ they are certain. But the laws and judgments  
“ which Antichrist has brought in, and added  
“ to the law of God, mar too much the church of  
“ Christ. For with the stewards of the church,  
“ the laws of Antichrist are the rules by which  
“ they make officers therein ; and to deceive the  
“ laity, Antichrist challengeth to be, in such things,  
“ fully God’s fellow ; for he affirms that, if he  
“ judgeth thus, his will should be taken for reason,  
“ whereas this is the highest point that falleth  
“ to the godhead. Popes, and kings, therefore,

“ should seek a reason above their own will, for CHAP.  
 “ such blasphemy often bringeth to men more — I.  
 “ than the pride of Lucifer. He said he would  
 “ ascend, and be like the Most High, but he chal-  
 “ lenged not to be the fellow of God, even with  
 “ him, or passing him! May God bring down  
 “ this pride, and help, that his word may reverse  
 “ that of the fiend! Well indeed, I know, that  
 “ when it is at the highest, this smoke shall dis-  
 “ appear.”<sup>24</sup> The advice of the preacher in con-  
 clusion is, that his hearers should study the  
 will of God, and thus learn to cherish an inde-  
 pendence of the judgments pronounced upon  
 them by “ popes or prelates,” inasmuch as such  
 decisions “ stretch not to doomsday”—the pe-  
 riod, when the will of God shall be felt as su-  
 preme, and unalterable.

One more extract must be sufficient, to illus-  
 trate the manner in which the reformer was accus-  
 tomed to notice the disorders of the hierarchy  
 from the pulpit. “ Freedom,” it is remarked, “ is  
 “ much coveted, as men know by nature, but  
 “ much more should christian men covet the  
 “ better freedom of Christ. It is known, however,  
 “ that Antichrist hath enthralled the church more  
 “ than it was under the old law, though then  
 “ the service was not to be borne. New laws are  
 “ now made by Antichrist, and such as are not  
 “ founded on the laws of the Saviour. More  
 “ ceremonies too are now brought in than were  
 “ in the old law, and more do they tarry men  
 “ in coming to heaven, than did the traditions of  
 “ the Scribes and Pharisees. One cord of this

<sup>24</sup> Hom. Bib. Reg.



CHAP. I. “ thraldom, is the lordship claimed by Antichrist,  
 — “ as being full lord both of spirituals and tem-  
 “ porals. Thus he turneth christian men aside  
 “ from serving Christ in christian freedom; so  
 “ much so, that they might well say as the poet  
 “ saith in his fable the frogs said to the har-  
 “ row—‘ Cursed be so many masters.’ For in  
 “ this day, christian men are oppressed, now with  
 “ popes, and now with bishops, now with cardi-  
 “ nals under popes, and now with prelates under  
 “ bishops, and now their head is assailed with  
 “ censures,—in short, buffeted are they as men  
 “ would serve a football. But certainly, if the  
 “ Baptist were not worthy to loose the latchet of  
 “ the shoe of Christ, Antichrist hath no power  
 “ thus to impede the freedom which Christ hath  
 “ bought. Christ gave this freedom to men, that  
 “ they might come to the bliss of Heaven with  
 “ less difficulty; but Antichrist burdens them, that  
 “ they may give him money. Foul, therefore, is  
 “ this doing, with respect both to God and his  
 “ law. Ever also do these hypocrites dread lest  
 “ God’s law should be shown, and they should  
 “ thus be convicted of their falsehood. For God  
 “ and his law are most powerful; and for a time,  
 “ only, may these deceivers hold men in the  
 “ thraldom of Satan.”<sup>25</sup>

Extracts  
 illustrating  
 the theolo-  
 gical doc-  
 trine and the  
 devotional  
 feeling of his  
 parochial  
 addresses.

But while these and similar evils were fre-  
 quently noticed in the sermons of the reformer,  
 and always in this intrepid temper, the flock com-  
 mitted to his care, as rector of Lutterworth, was far  
 from being unaccustomed to the sound of themes  
 more devotional in their character, and less con-

<sup>25</sup> Hom. Bib. Reg.



nected with the passions too commonly excited by controversy. The following is the substance of a sermon delivered by him on a christmas day, and upon the passage in Isaiah, beginning with the words, "Unto us a child is born." "On this day we may affirm that a Child is born to us, since Jesus, according to our belief, was this day born. Both in figure, and in letter, God spake of old to this intent, that to us a Child should be born, in whom we should have joy. From this speech of Isaiah, three short lessons are to be delivered, that men may rejoice in the after-services of this Child. First, we hold it as a part of our faith, that as our first parents had sinned, there must be atonement made for it, according to the righteousness of God. For as God is merciful, so he is full of righteousness. But except he keep his righteousness in this point, how may he judge all the world? There is no sin done but what is against God, but this sin was done directly against the Lord Almighty, and Allrightful. The greater also the Lord is, against whom any sin is done, the greater always is the sin,—just as to do against the king's bidding is deemed the greatest of offences. But the sin which is done against God's bidding is greater without measure. God then, according to our belief, bid Adam that he should not eat of the apple. Yet he broke God's command; nor was he to be excused therein by his own weakness, by Eve, nor by the serpent; and hence, according to the righteousness of God, this sin must always be punished. It is to speak lightly, to say that God

CHAP. " might of his mere power forgive this sin, without  
I. " the atonement which was made for it, since the  
" justice of God would not suffer this, but re-  
" quires that every trespass be punished either in  
" earth or in hell. God may not accept a person,  
" to forgive him his sin without an atonement,  
" else he must give free licence to sin, both in  
" angels and men, and then sin were no sin, and  
" our God were no God !

" Such is the first lesson we take as a part of our  
" faith ; the second is, that the person who may  
" make atonement for the sin of our first father,  
" must needs be God and man. For as man's nature  
" trespassed, so must man's nature render atone-  
" ment. An angel therefore would attempt in vain  
" to make atonement for man, for he has not the  
" power to do it, nor was his the nature that here  
" sinned. But since all men form one person, if  
" any member of this person maketh atonement,  
" the whole person maketh it. But we may see  
" that if God made a man of nought, or strictly  
" anew, after the manner of Adam, yet he were  
" bound to God, to the extent of his power for  
" himself, having nothing wherewith to make  
" atonement for his own, or for Adam's sin.  
" Since then, atonement must be made for the  
" sin of Adam, as we have shown, the person  
" to make the atonement must be God and man,  
" for then the worthiness of this person's deeds  
" were even with the unworthiness of the sin."

From this necessity of an atonement for sin,  
and of the incarnation that it might be made, the  
conclusion is said to follow, that the Child born  
must needs be God and man. The doctrine of

the discourse is then made to assume a practical bearing. “And we suppose,” observes the preacher, “that this Child is only born *to* the men who follow him in his manner of life, for he was born *against* others. The men who are unjust and proud, and who rebel against God, may read their judgment in the person of Christ. By him, they must needs be condemned, and most certainly if they continue wicked toward his Spirit to their death. And if we covet sincerely that this Child may prove to be born to us; have we joy of him, and follow we him in these three virtues, in righteousness, and meekness, and in patience for our God. For whoever shall be against Christ and his Spirit in these unto his death, must needs be condemned of this Child, as others must needs be saved. And thus the joy professed in this Child, who was all meekness, and full of virtues, should make men to be children in malice, and then they would well keep this festival. To those who would indulge in strife, I would say that the Child who is born is also Prince of peace, and loveth peace, and contemneth men contrary to peace. Reflect we then how Christ came in the fulness of time, when he should; and how he came in meekness, teaching us this at his birth; and how he came in patience, continuing even from his birth unto his death; and follow we him in these things, for the joy that we here have in him, and because this joy in the patience of Christ bringeth to joy that ever shall last.” <sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Hom. Bib. Reg.

CHAP. I. The doctrines of scripture with regard to the person of Christ, and his sufferings considered as the price of our redemption, are of frequent occurrence in these discourses. It was in the following manner that the reformer generally spoke on the latter subject. “Men mark the passion of Christ, “and print it on their heart, somewhat to follow “it. It was the most *voluntary* passion that ever “was suffered, and the most *painful*. It was “most *voluntary*, and so most meritorious. Hence, “when Christ went to Jerusalem, he foretold “the form of his passion to his disciples, and he “who before concealed himself to come to the “city, came now to his suffering in a way to “shew his free will. Hence also he saith at the “supper, ‘With desire have I coveted to eat of “this passover with you.’ The desire of his god- “head, and the desire of his manhood, moved him “to eat thereof, and afterwards to suffer. But “all this was significant, and in figure of his last “supper which he eateth in heaven with the men “whom he hath chosen. And since Christ suf- “fered thus cheerfully for the sins of his brethren, “they should suffer gratefully for their own sins, “and should purpose to forsake them. This, in- “deed, is the cause why God would have the “passion of Christ rehearsed—the profit of the “brethren of Christ, and not his own. But the “*pain* of Christ’s passion, passed all other pain, “for he was the most tender of men, and in “middle age; and God, by miracle, allowed his “mind to suffer, for else, by his joy, he might “not have known sorrow. In Christ’s passion, “indeed, were all things, which could make

“ his pain great, and so make it the more meritorious. The place was solemn, and the day also, and the hour, the most so known to Jews, or heathen men ; and the ingratitude, and contempt were most ; for men who should most have loved Christ, ordained the foulest death, in return for his deepest kindness ! We should also believe, that Christ suffered not, in any manner, but for some certain reason ; for he is both God and man, who made all things in their number, and so would frame his passion to answer to the greatness of man’s sin. Follow we then after Christ in his blessed passion, and keep we ourselves from sin hereafter, and gather we a devout mind from him.”<sup>27</sup> The reader will remember, that these devotional instructions were prepared for the usual auditory of a parish church in the fourteenth century.

The following passages were intended by the preacher, to explain the only sense in which he could admit that men might be said to “ deserve ” the felicities of heaven. “ We should know that faith is a gift of God, and that it may not be given to men except it be graciously. Thus, indeed, all the good which men have is of God, and accordingly when God rewardeth a good work of man, he crowneth his own gift. This then is also of grace, even as all things are of grace that men have according to the will of God. God’s goodness is the first cause why he confers any good on man ; and so it may not be that God doeth good to men, but if he do it freely, by his own grace ; and with this under-

Doctrine of  
grace.

<sup>27</sup> Hom. Bib. Reg. p. 61.

CHAP. “ stood, we shall grant that men deserve of God.”

I.

But the doctrine of short-sighted men “ as was  
 “ Pelagius, and others, who conceive that nothing  
 “ may be, unless it be of itself, as are mere sub-  
 “ stances, is to be scorned, and left to idiots.” It  
 is then remarked, in connexion with the story of  
 the centurion, whose faith had elicited the above  
 observation, “ Learn we of this knight, to be  
 “ meek in heart, and in word, and in deed ; for  
 “ he granted first, that he was under man’s power,  
 “ and yet by power of man he might do many  
 “ things ; much more should we know that we  
 “ are under God’s power, and that we may do  
 “ nothing but by the power of God ; and woe shall  
 “ hereafter be to us, if we abuse this power.  
 “ This root of meekness, therefore, should pro-  
 “ duce in us all other virtues.” It is evident  
 that, in the mind of the reformer, the doctrine of  
 these passages, dangerous as its tendencies are  
 sometimes said to be, was connected with a  
 feeling of the most sincere devotion.

On the con-  
 solations of  
 religion.

It is thus he endeavours to strengthen the mind  
 of the christian worshipper, while suffering under  
 the adversities of life, and especially from the  
 contempt of men. “ As men who are in a fever  
 “ desire not that which were best for them, so  
 “ men in sin covet not that which is best for  
 “ them in this world. The world said that the  
 “ apostles were fools, and forsaken of God ; and  
 “ so it would say to-day of all who live like  
 “ them ; for worldly joy, and earthly possessions  
 “ alone pleaseth them, while of heavenly things,  
 “ and of a right following after Christ, they savour  
 “ not. And this their choice, in the present

“ world, is a manifest proof against them, that, in CHAP.  
 “ soul, they are not holy, but turned aside to the I.  
 “ things of the world. For as the palate of a  
 “ sick man, distempered from good meat, moveth  
 “ him to covet things contrary to his health, so it  
 “ is with the soul of man when it savoureth not  
 “ of the law of God. And as the want of na-  
 “ tural appetite is a deadly sign to man, so a  
 “ wanting of spiritual relish for God’s word is a  
 “ sign of his second death.” Yet men are said to  
 judge of their participation in the favour of God,  
 by the success of their worldly enterprises. But  
 to expose this error, it is observed, “ we should  
 “ leave these sensible signs, and take the example  
 “ of holy men, as of Christ, and his apostles; how  
 “ they had not their bliss on earth, but that here  
 “ Christ ordained them pain, and the hatred of  
 “ the world, even much suffering to the men  
 “ whom he most loved,—and this, to teach us  
 “ how to follow him.” It is therefore said to  
 follow, that in this world the marks of patient  
 suffering should much rather be taken as those  
 which bespeak the love of God.<sup>28</sup>

The connexion between this independence of  
 terrestrial evils, and the faith of the gospel, is  
 thus pointed out. “ If thou hast a full belief of  
 “ Christ, how he lived here on the earth, and  
 “ how he overcame the world, thou also over-  
 “ comest it, as a kind son. For if thou takest  
 “ heed how Christ despised the world, and fol-  
 “ lowest him here, as thou shouldst by the faith  
 “ of the Father, thou must needs overcome it.  
 “ And here it is manifest what many men are in

Connection  
between  
faith and  
devotion.

<sup>28</sup> Hom. Bib. Reg. p. 78.



CHAP. “ this world. They are not born of God, nor do  
 I. “ they believe in Christ. For if this belief were  
 “ in them, they should follow Christ in the man-  
 “ ner of his life, but they are not of faith, as will  
 “ be known in the day of doom. What man  
 “ should fully believe that the day of doom will  
 “ be anon, and that God shall then judge men,  
 “ after what they have been in his cause, and not  
 “ prepare himself to follow Christ for this bless-  
 “ ing thereof? Either the belief of such men  
 “ sleepeth, or they want a right belief; since  
 “ men who love this world, and rest in the lusts  
 “ thereof, live as if God had never spoken as in  
 “ his word, or would fail to judge them for their  
 “ doing. To all christian men, therefore, the  
 “ faith of Christ’s life is needful, and hence we  
 “ should know the gospel, for this telleth the be-  
 “ lief of Christ.”<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Hom. Bib. Reg p. 70. It may be due to myself to state, that previous to the publication of the present work, no information, at all satisfactory, as to the general character of these homilies

had been presented to the public, nor have they been at all quoted, so as to assist the reader in forming any judgment respecting them. Note to the second edition.



## CHAPTER II.

HISTORY OF ATTEMPTS TOWARD A TRANSLATION OF THE SCRIPTURES INTO THE LANGUAGE OF THIS COUNTRY BEFORE THE AGE OF WYCLIFFE — BY THE ANGLO-SAXON CLERGY — BY THE ANGLO-NORMAN. — WYCLIFFE'S PURPOSE, AS EMBRACING A TRANSLATION OF THE WHOLE VOLUME, AND ITS GENERAL CIRCULATION, STRICTLY A NOVELTY. — THIS AFFIRMED BY KNIGHTON. — SOME CIRCUMSTANCES FAVOURABLE TO THIS ENTERPRISE. — EXTRACTS EXHIBITING THE REFORMER'S MANNER OF DEFENDING THIS EFFORT. — THE INSURRECTION OF THE COMMONS.

THAT the gospel was known to the people of CHAP.  
this island, before the close of the first century, II.  
is the general testimony of historians.<sup>1</sup> Three  
centuries, also, intervened, before that connexion  
between the subject provinces of Britain and the  
capital of the empire, which had led to this diffusion  
of christianity, was dissolved. We have no  
authority, however, for supposing, that any portion  
of the sacred writings was possessed by our  
Celtic ancestors, during that period, in the vernacular  
tongue. With the few, indeed, who could read, the Latin,  
though introduced by their conquerors, was the principal  
object of attention;<sup>2</sup> and the importance of obtaining  
the scriptures in their own dialect, which this circumstance  
served greatly to diminish, was probably overlooked.  
Subsequently, the religion of the Britons must

<sup>1</sup> Usher, Stillingfleet, Collier.

<sup>2</sup> Tacitus, *Vita Agric.* c. xxi. Gildas, *Hist.* The last writer observes, that

from the prevalence of the Latin language, Britain might have been called a Roman rather than a British island.

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have suffered much from their protracted war with the Saxons ; and after the arrival of Augustine, nearly a century was occupied in bringing the disciples of Odin to their partial acknowledgment of the God of the Christians.

Attempts toward a translation of the scriptures by the Anglo-Saxons, 600.

It was in the seventh century that Cedman, an Anglo-Saxon monk, produced a composition, which claimed the attention of his countrymen, as exhibiting the first application of their language to sacred poetry ; and as the first attempt to render any part of the inspired volume in the speech of our forefathers.<sup>3</sup> This poem, which has all the marks of the antiquity assigned to it, includes the leading events of Old Testament history, as the creation of the world, the fall of angels and of man, the deluge, the departure from Egypt, the entrance upon Canaan, with some subsequent occurrences. In the following century, Aldhelm, bishop of Sherborne ; and Guthlac, the celebrated anchoret, are among the authors of the Anglo-Saxon versions of the Psalter. In the same age, the venerable Bede prefers his claim to the honour of a literal trans-

700.

<sup>3</sup> Bede, iv. 24.—On this interesting subject, Mr. Lewis's volume, intitled "A History of the English Translations of the Bible," is well known ; also a lesser work by Johnson. The latter production, however, though frequently cited as an authority, and honoured with a place among bishop Watson's Theological Tracts, is strangely inaccurate. I have found no better guide than Mr. Baber, a gentleman to whose discernment the public are indebted for a reprint of Wycliffe's New Testament. To that work a chapter is prefixed, intitled, "An Historical Account of the Saxon and English Versions

"of the Scriptures, previous to the opening of the Fifteenth Century," and it determines every question on this subject to the time of Wycliffe. The brief memoirs of our reformer, published in connexion with the same work, I should have noticed in the Preface, had I not been sensible that the writer is too well acquainted with these things, not to be fully aware, that his notices respecting the sacred scriptures, and his enlarged and revised catalogue of the Wycliffe manuscripts, impart to that portion of his publication its chief value.

lation of St. John's gospel.<sup>4</sup> A manuscript copy of the Latin gospels, with a Saxon version interlined, known by the name of the Durham book, is attributed on probable evidence to about the time of Alfred.<sup>5</sup> The Rushworth Gloss, is a Latin transcript of the same portion of the sacred volume, with a Saxon translation, introduced after the same manner, the latter being apparently the production of the tenth century.<sup>6</sup> Among the valuable manuscripts of Benet College, Cambridge, is a third copy of the gospels in the Saxon tongue, written a little before the conquest; and a fourth, which belongs to the same period, and appears to have been copied from the former, may be seen in the Bodleian library.<sup>7</sup> But an ecclesiastic, who did more than all his brethren toward supplying his countrymen with the scriptures in their own language, was Elfric. This industrious scholar lived during the reign of Ethelred, and subscribes himself, at different periods, as monk, mass priest, and abbot. In his epitome of the Old and New Testament, composed for Sigwerd, a nobleman, we are informed, that at the request of various persons, he had translated the Pentateuch, the books of Joshua and Judges, those of Esther, Job, and Judith, also the two books of Maccabees, with part of the first and second book of Kings.<sup>8</sup> Alfred,

<sup>4</sup> Baber. Cuthberti Vita Ven. Bedæ.

<sup>5</sup> It is preserved in the British Museum, Nero, D. iv. and is described by Mr. Baber, as the finest specimen of Saxon calligraphy and decoration extant.

<sup>6</sup> This is in the Bodleian, D. xxiv. No. 3964. It derived its name from

its former possessor, John Rushworth, Esq. of Lincoln's - inn. Baber, *ubi supra*.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Turner's Hist. iii. 442. Baber. The extent of Elfric's labours is learnt, as stated above, from various incidental notices occurring in such of

CHAP. whose name is associated by the admiration of  
 II. our ancestors, with almost every thing enlightened in their polity or religion, is noticed as having prefixed a translation of certain passages from the Mosaic writings to his code of laws; and he is said to have made a considerable progress in a Saxon version of the Psalms a little previous to his death.<sup>9</sup>

By the  
 Anglo-  
 Norman.

This, however, is the extent of our information, on this interesting question, as connected with the Anglo-Saxon period of our history. The Anglo-Norman clergy were far more competent to have supplied their flock with this efficient means of sacred knowledge; but, in this respect, the example of their predecessors was slighted, or rather disapproved. Some fragments of scriptural truth may have been preserved by means of certain lessons which occurred in the ritual of the period; but the first attempt, after the conquest, to place any more complete portion of the scriptures before the English people, appears to have been made by the author of a rhyming paraphrase on the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, intitled "Ormulum."<sup>10</sup> Subsequent to the date of this work, which evidently belongs to one of the

his works as have descended to us. In his Epitome of the Old and New Testament, he has not only made his selection from the scriptures, but has frequently added things to the sacred story from other writings. A copy of this work, printed with an English translation by William L'Isle in 1623, is in the Bodleian, and another has been for some time in my possession. It is thus it begins; "Abbot Elfrike, greeteth friendly Sigwerd, at East Heolon. True it is I tell thee, that

"very wise is he who speaketh by his doings; and well proceedeth he both with God and with the world, who furnisheth himself with good works. And very plain it is in holy scripture, that holy men employed in well doing, were in this world held in good reputation."

<sup>9</sup> Spelman, i. 354. Prefatio Regis Aluredi, M. ad Leges suas. See also Baber, 62.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. Bodleian. Junius, i.

earliest stages of our language, we perceive a similar application of mind in a collection of metrical pieces, called *Salus Animæ*, or in English, “*Sowlehele*.”<sup>11</sup> In the huge volume thus designated, the materials are not all of the same class. The object of the compiler, or transcriber, seems to have been to furnish a complete body of legendary and scriptural history in verse, or rather to collect into one view, all the religious history he could find. It professes, however, to exhibit an outline, both of the Old and New Testament, and its composition is supposed to have preceded the opening of the fourteenth century. In Benet College, Cambridge, there is another work of the same description, the offspring of the same period, and containing notices of the principal events recorded in the books of *Genesis* and *Exodus*. In that collection, there is also a copy of the *Psalms* in English metre, which is attributed to about the year 1300; and two transcripts, of nearly the same antiquity, have been preserved—the one in the Bodleian library, the other in that of Sir Robert Cotton.<sup>12</sup> But it is not until the middle of the following century, that we trace the remotest attempt to produce a literal translation even of detached portions of the scriptures. The effort then made was by Richard Roll, called the Hermit of Hampole. His labours, also, were restricted to a little more than half the book of *Psalms*, and to these a devotional commentary was annexed. Contemporary with this recluse, were some devout men among the clergy, who

<sup>11</sup> Warton's *History of English Poetry*, sect. i. MSS. Bodleian, 779, Baber.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 65.

CHAP. II. produced translations of such passages from the scriptures as were prominent in the offices of the church; while others ventured to complete separate versions of the gospels, or the epistles. The persons thus laudably employed were certainly few in number; but parts of St. Mark, and of St. Luke, and of several among the epistles, are included in the results of their labour which have descended to us. It should be added, that these versions, which are of various merit, were generally guarded by a comment.<sup>13</sup>

Novelty of Wycliffe's design in translating the scriptures.

From these details, as the sum of our information on the point to which they refer, it is evident, first, that a literal translation, of the entire scriptures—the laborious enterprise completed by Wycliffe about this period—was strictly a novel event in our religious history; and, secondly, that the publication of such a work, to be the property, not of distinguished individuals, but of the people in general, was a measure far beyond any thing contemplated by his precursors in the labours of translation. The only ground of suspicion, in the least degree plausible, as to the claims of Wycliffe to the originalty asserted, is contained in a production described as “a Prologue to the Bible,” and in a manuscript of the Bodleian. The writer of the Prologue speaks of being employed in translating the whole Bible, and refers also to an existing version. But that this document has been erroneously attributed to Wycliffe, is unquestionable, as it adverts to more than one event subsequent to the decease of our

<sup>13</sup> Baber, 66, 67. Lewis.

reformer.<sup>14</sup> In the Oxford manuscript, also, every thing depends on the date attached to it; but here an erasure has evidently been effected; and it is hardly to be doubted, that to supply the vacancy thus produced, would be to make the work a production of the year 1408.<sup>15</sup> The author of the Prologue, noticed above, refers to an “Englyshe Bible of late translated,” by which he evidently intends that produced by the rector of Lutterworth. In the esteem of the reformer’s opponents, to have produced our first translation of the sacred writings must have been a very doubtful honour. It is nevertheless one, of which they have been not a little concerned to deprive him.

Had their zeal in this particular been much better sustained by authority, the testimony of Knighton must have been sufficient for ever to determine the question with the unprejudiced enquirer. That historian must be allowed to have known the customs of his contemporaries, and especially the place assigned by his own order to the inspired records, quite as well as any modern writer. Adverting to the zeal of Wycliffe in rendering the scriptures the property of the people, he thus writes: “Christ delivered his gospel to the clergy and doctors of the church, that they might administer to the laity and to weaker persons, according to the state of the

Testimony  
of Knighton  
respecting  
the reform-  
er’s transla-  
tion of the  
scriptures.

<sup>14</sup> It is a curious production, and has been twice printed. The references to John Gerson, to a novel regulation in the University of Oxford, and to the proceedings of the parliament in 1395, determine its date as subsequent to the time of Wycliffe.

<sup>15</sup> Baber. Historical Account and Memoirs of Wiclif. The present state of the numerals referred to is as follows, MCCC VIII. To supply the vacancy would be, we may reasonably suppose, to form the date assumed in the text.



CHAP. II. “ times and the wants of men. But this master  
 ——— “ John Wycliffe translated it out of Latin into En-  
 “ glish, and thus laid it more open to the laity, and  
 “ to women, who could read, than it had formerly  
 “ been to the most learned of the clergy, even to  
 “ those of them who had the best understanding.  
 ‘ And in this way the gospel pearl is cast abroad,  
 “ and trodden under foot of swine, and that which  
 “ was before precious to both clergy and laity, is  
 “ rendered, as it were, the common jest of both.  
 “ The jewel of the church is turned into the sport  
 “ of the people, and what was hitherto the principal  
 “ gift of the clergy and divines, is made for ever  
 “ common to the laity.”<sup>16</sup> It was thus the canon  
 of Leicester bewailed the translation of the Bible  
 into the language of his country. To him, it not  
 only appeared as a novelty in the history of offences,  
 but as an innovation on ecclesiastical discipline,  
 amounting to nothing short of sacrilege, and as  
 tending to destroy even the appearances of religion.  
 Nor can we forbear to regard his sentiments, in  
 this respect, as those of his order in the fourteenth

<sup>16</sup> De Eventibus Col. 2644. To the same effect is the decision of an English Council in 1408, with the archbishop Arundel at its head. “ The translation of the text of holy scriptures out of one tongue into another is a dangerous thing, as St. Jerome testifies, because it is not easy to make the verse in all respects the same. Therefore we enact, and ordain, that no one henceforth do, by his own authority, translate any text of holy scripture into the English tongue, or any other, by way of book or treatise; nor let any such book or treatise now lately composed in the time of John Wycliffe

“ aforesaid, or since, or hereafter to be composed, be read in whole or in part, in public or in private, under the pain of the greater excommunication.” Wilkins. Concilia, iii. 317. The spirit of this enactment was evidently that of the majority of the clergy in the age of Wycliffe. He describes them as affirming it to be heresy to speak of the holy scriptures in English.” But this is said to be a condemnation of “ the Holy Ghost, who first gave the scriptures in tongues to the apostles of Christ, as it is written, to speak the word in all languages that were ordained of God under heaven.” Wicket.



century. The historian no doubt knew that frag- CHAP.  
ments, and even considerable portions of holy writ, II. —  
had been clothed in this unconsecrated dialect;  
but he also knew, that, hitherto, they were merely  
parts of that secreted volume which had been so  
rendered, and that these curious documents sel-  
dom passed into the hands of the laity, and that  
they were never meant to pass into those of the  
people. Hence, to invite the community, with-  
out distinction, to the study of the gospel, exhort-  
ing them to regulate their present conduct, and  
their hopes and fears in relation to the future,  
purely by its sanctions, is described as the as-  
sumption of ground for which no precedent could  
be pleaded, and is justly viewed as threatening  
the existing fabric of ecclesiastical power with  
dissolution.

Previous to the conquest, and through a con-  
siderable interval afterwards, there was little evil  
to be apprehended from any such employment  
of the Bible. The repose of ignorance was too  
profound to be readily broken, and the vassalage,  
both of the body and of the mind, had been too  
little disturbed to admit of being speedily re-  
moved. But in the age of Wycliffe, the aspect of  
society in England retained but a faint tracing  
of its earlier features. The augmented population  
of the country, the progress of commerce, and of  
a representative government, and the partial  
revival of learning, had all contributed to im-  
provement; and together with the bolder en-  
croachments of the papacy, and that spirit of  
complaint and resistance which these had pro-  
duced, were pre-eminently favourable to the zeal

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of our reformer as employed in applying the popular language to the pure records of the gospel. His antagonists, we have seen, were by no means insensible to the probable results of the enterprise in which his energies were engaged; and to his own discernment, they were obvious in a much greater degree. He knew that to render the contents of the Bible familiar to the people, was to introduce a light which must impart a faithful colouring to the actions of men; and that ignorance, and irreligion, might well tremble for their sway, when thus brought into nearest connection with their opposites. Nearly twenty years had now passed since his first dispute with the mendicants; and during this period his writings disclose a growing conviction as to the sufficiency of the scriptures, and the importance of the right of private judgment. The success, also, which attended his discussions on these points, evidently prepared him for his present effort; the effect of which, according to his enemies, was to make the matters of the gospel revelation better known to the laity, and even to females, than they had hitherto been to the most distinguished among the clergy.<sup>17</sup>

1379.

<sup>17</sup> Knighton, Col. 2644. Another fact, which was highly favourable to this great work of the reformer, is thus briefly and luminously stated by Mr. Baber: "Englishmen were now beginning to be more attentive to their own tongue. Before the conquest, the popular language had been invaded by the Normannic. After that event, as the Norman lords increased in power, their tongue became the language of polished society,

"of the laws, and of the pleadings in the courts of judicature. Latin was used for the services of the church, and the general purposes of literature; and the Anglo-Saxon remained chiefly confined to the commonalty. In the thirteenth century, the popular language began in some degree to recover its rank; the nobles, and the higher classes of society, did not, as heretofore, disdain to resort to it as a colloquial tongue; and ori-

Some extracts, illustrative of the arguments with which the reformer opposed the clamours of his adversaries on this question, will be expected by the reader. These we might select from nearly the whole of his writings, subsequent to the year 1378. In one of his earliest vindications he thus writes; "As it is certain that the truth of the christian faith becomes more evident the more the faith itself is known, and that lord bishops condemn in the ear of secular lords what is faithful and true, on account of hatred to the person who maintains it,—honest men are bound to declare the doctrine which they hold, not only in Latin, but in the vulgar tongue, that the truth may be more plainly and more widely known." The writer then refers to an English treatise which he had previously addressed to secular lords, and in which he had urged them to regulate their life "solely according to the law of Christ." That work is now lost, but the Latin

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Wycliffe's  
manner of  
defending  
his conduct  
on this point

"ginal works, as well as translations from the productions of authors who had written in French, now began to appear in an English dress. But at this period, it must be allowed, our language was rough and unpolished, and those who wrote in it were authors who possessed few ideas of taste or elegance. In proportion, however, as the tyrannical power of the barons declined, and as the paths which led to honour and distinction became more open to commoners, the English tongue, in the fourteenth century, became more general, and its improvements were considerable. The accessions it had received, and the changes it had experienced within the last three centuries, were at this

"period numerous and striking; for our language, as it was now spoken by the noble and the learned, was considerably enriched by words borrowed from the Roman and French dialects, and much altered in its pronunciation, its form, and its terminations. Among the lower orders of the people, however, upon whom refinement makes but slow advances, English, with respect to its great mass, preserved more of its Saxon origin and phraseology. Such was the state of the vernacular tongue at the time in which Wiclif wrote. The reformer quickly discerned the advantage which might be derived from this propitious circumstance." —Memoirs of Wiclif, 36, 37.

CHAP. composition, under the same title, is preserved,  
II. and in this the author proceeds to state that  
“ those heretics ought not to be heard, who ima-  
“ gine that temporal lords should not possess  
“ the law of God, but that it is sufficient for them  
“ to know what may be learnt from the lips of  
“ their priests and prelates.” The error of this  
doctrine is thus exposed: “ As the faith of the  
“ church is contained in the scriptures, the more  
“ these are known in an orthodox sense, the bet-  
“ ter. And since secular men should assuredly  
“ understand the faith, it should be taught them  
“ in whatever language is best known to them.  
“ Inasmuch, also, as the doctrines of our faith  
“ are more clearly and precisely expressed in the  
“ scriptures, than they may possibly be by priests,  
“ —seeing, if one may venture so to speak, that  
“ many prelates are but too ignorant of scripture,  
“ while others conceal parts of scripture,—and as  
“ the verbal instructions of priests have many  
“ other defects, the conclusion is abundantly  
“ plain, that believers should ascertain for them-  
“ selves the matters of their faith, by having the  
“ scriptures in a language which they fully under-  
“ stand. Besides, it was by faith, as described  
“ by the apostle (Heb. chap. xi.), that the saints  
“ of old overcame kingdoms, and hastened to  
“ their own country. Why then should not the  
“ things of faith be disclosed to the people now,  
“ so that they may comprehend them more  
“ clearly? He, in consequence, who shall pre-  
“ vent this, or murmur against it, does his utmost  
“ to continue the people in a state of unbelief,  
“ and condemnation. Hence, also, the laws made

“ by prelates are not to be received as matters of CHAP.  
 “ faith, nor are we to confide in their public in- II.  
 “ structions, or in any of their words, but as they  
 “ are founded on holy writ ; for according to the  
 “ constant doctrine of Augustine, the scriptures  
 “ contain the whole of truth ;<sup>18</sup> and this translation  
 “ of them should therefore do at least this good,  
 “ viz. placing bishops and priests above suspicion  
 “ as to the parts of it which they profess to ex-  
 “ plain. Other means also, as prelates, the pope,  
 “ and friars, may prove defective ; and to provide  
 “ against this, Christ, and his apostles, evangelized  
 “ the greater portion of the world, by making  
 “ known the scriptures in a language which was  
 “ familiar to the people. To this end, indeed,  
 “ did the Holy Spirit endow them with the know-  
 “ ledge of all tongues. Why, therefore, should  
 “ not the living disciples of Christ do as they did,  
 “ opening the scriptures to the people so clearly  
 “ and plainly that they may verily understand  
 “ them, since, except to the unbeliever disposed  
 “ to resist the Holy Spirit, the things contained in  
 “ scripture are no fiction ? ” The reformer then  
 solemnly inculcates the doctrine of individual  
 responsibility, as extending to all the matters of  
 faith and practice. From the certainty, also, that  
 the answer of a prelate or a canonist will be of no  
 avail, in the day when each man shall stand before  
 the judgment-seat of the Redeemer, he again vin-  
 dicates his appeal to the right of private judgment,  
 and urges on the laity the duty of a devout atten-

<sup>18</sup> *Doctrina Christiana*, lib. ii. in fine  
 ep. ad Volusianum, cited by Lewis,  
 c. v. Walden, the known antagonist  
 of Wycliffe, affirmed, that “ the de-

“ crees of bishops in the church, are  
 “ of greater authority and dignity than  
 “ is the authority of the scriptures.”  
 Walden. *Doc. Tri. i. lib. ii. c. 21.*

CHAP. II. tion to whatever may promote their faith in the grace of the Saviour, and obedience to his will. From motives thus enlightened, did Wycliffe prosecute his translation of the Bible. How far he was assisted in this great work is unknown. There is a notice attached to one of his Bibles, which attributes a translation of a portion of Baruch to Nicholas Hereford. The statement is written in less durable ink than the volume itself, and in a different hand, but is probably correct. We know that copies of the whole, or of parts, of the scriptures, in the language of the people, were now multiplied with surprising rapidity.<sup>19</sup>

Among the manuscripts which have escaped

<sup>19</sup> MS. *Speculum Secularium Dominorum*. Usser. *De Script.* 160. c. v. Lewis, o. v. Baber's *Historical Account*, 69. When certain objections were urged against translating the scriptures into English, it was remarked that the same might be said of rendering them from the Greek into Latin, since it was certain that the Latins had not always used their version without abusing it. And men there were, who did not hesitate to go the length of affirming, that evil must result from submitting the scriptures to an indiscriminate inspection in any language. It is thus that William Butler, a Franciscan, and an opponent of Wycliffe, writes on this point: "The prelates ought not to allow that any person should read the scriptures translated into Latin, at pleasure; because, as experience proves, this has been the occasion of many falling into heresies and errors. It is not, therefore, wise that any one, whensoever and wheresoever he will, should be left to the eager study of the scriptures."—Usser. *De Script.* 163. Lewis, c. v. Such was the danger apprehended from this source, that some twenty years after Wycliffe's decease,

it was made a law of the university of Oxford "that no man should learn divinity, neither holy writ, except he had done his form in art; that is, that hath commenced in art, and hath been regent two years after, which would be nine years, or ten, before he would learn holy writ!"—*Elucidarium Bibliorum*, c. xiii.

Previous to the decision of the council of Trent on that subject, many sound catholics discarded the apocryphal writings, which had become appended to the Old Testament. (Cosin, on the Canon.) Wycliffe was guided chiefly by the authority of Jerome, and retained only such books in the sacred canon as are at present received by the protestant churches. "Satis est (ecclesiam) pro sua militiâ habere 22 libros de veteri testamento authenticos \* \* \* Non oportet ecclesiam militantem illis libris credere tanquam authenticis. MS. *De Veritate Scripturæ*." Yet to the close of his life he continued to cite the apocryphal books as a reputable, though not as an inspired authority. An extract from the reformer's translation of the Old Testament may be seen in the Appendix, No. 1.

the destroying hand of our native inquisitors, are several which appear to have been completed before the decease of the reformer. The effect we learn from other sources besides the invectives of Knighton. It was at no mean cost of labour, reproach, and danger; and with a view, evidently, to the accomplishment of the most important ends, that this service was performed. The achievement, indeed, is one, which of itself must vest the name of Wycliffe with a peculiar halo, in the recollections of every man regarding the dissolution of the papal thralldom in this island, as the fall of ignorance, oppression, and impiety.

But while the reformer was employed in this master-effort to enlighten the piety of his countrymen, an insurrection broke out among the populace, and one which appeared to threaten the overthrow of every established authority. The event fills a prominent place in the general history of this period, and the enemies of Wycliffe cease not to insinuate, that the violence of the insurgents arose, in no small degree, from the tendency of his projected innovations. Had the name of our reformer been wholly unconnected with this memorable occurrence, a distinct notice of its causes and character would not have been foreign from the design of the present work. The zeal of his adversaries has rendered this indispensable. The inquiry, however, would interrupt our narrative very considerably, and I have therefore thought it proper to place the substance of what may be known on this subject, in a note at the end of the volume.<sup>20</sup>

CHAP.  
II.

Insurrection  
of the com-  
mons.

<sup>20</sup> See Note A.



## CHAPTER III.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION—OPPOSED BY BERENGARIUS—AND BY THE VAUDOIS AND ALBIGENSES—NOT RECOGNISED BY THE ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH—DEFENDED BY LANFRANC, AND ESPOUSED BY THE ANGLO-NORMAN CLERGY.—WYCLIFFE'S OPPOSITION TO IT.—SEVERE PENALTIES TO BE INFLICTED ON ALL WHO SHOULD FAVOUR HIS OPINIONS CONCERNING IT.—HIS APPEAL TO THE CIVIL POWER FOR PROTECTION.—HIS FEELING UNDER THESE PERSECUTIONS.—ANALYSIS OF HIS "WICKET."—PROCEEDINGS OF COURTNEY, AND THE SYNOD AT THE GREY IRIARS.—WYCLIFFE FAVOURED BY THE UNIVERSITY.—STATE OF PARTIES IN THE NATION UNFRIENDLY TO THE EFFORTS OF THE REFORMERS.—INQUISITORIAL STATUTE OBTAINED BY THE CLERGY.—NOTICE OF ROBERT RIGGE, DR. HEREFORD, REPPINGTON, ASHTON, AND OTHERS.

CHAP.  
III.

Transub-  
stantiation.

Opposed by  
Berenga-  
rius.

It has appeared, that until the middle of the ninth century, the manner in which the body and the blood of Christ are present in the eucharist, was the subject of debate, or rather of a peaceful difference of sentiment, among persons holding the chief dignities of the hierarchy. The same may be said of a considerable interval afterwards. But from that period, and from causes which have also been explained,<sup>1</sup> the advocates of the mysterious dogma, which in the twelfth century began to be designated transubstantiation, rapidly increased. Its progress, however, was far from being uninterrupted; and among its opponents the most distinguished place must be allotted to Berengarius, a gallic prelate, who about the middle of the eleventh century brought his genius

<sup>1</sup> Prelim. View, c. i. sect. 8.



and learning, which were both greatly above the character of the age, to an investigation of its claims. His doctrine was strictly that of the primitive church, and of the existing protestant communities. The zeal and ability with which it was supported, diffused his name through Europe, and attracted the enmity or admiration of the clergy through the western nations. In the cause of his opinions, the disputant patiently submitted to the spiritual censures of the pontiff, and of a council assembled at Paris; and the displeasure of his sovereign, which his zeal had provoked, was followed by the forfeiture of his episcopal revenues. The burden of such evils was probably lightened by remembering that his disciples in France, in Italy, in England, and particularly in the states of Germany, were numerous and increasing. But such, it appears, was the extent of the suffering, which this advocate of truth and reason was prepared to endure in defence of his tenets. Thrice was he compelled to appear at Rome; and as often was his doctrine formally renounced, only to be again avowed, as the prospect of impunity returned. Toward the close of life, he retired from the agitated scenes which for more than thirty years had been familiar to him; and the remembrance of the indecision, which had been allowed to sully his character, is said to have embittered his seclusion. But he died with the reputation of sanctity, and his followers never became extinct.<sup>2</sup>

The Vaudois and Albigenes, who had never embraced the marvellous theory adverted to, were

And by the  
Vaudois and  
Albigenes.

Mosheim, ii. 558—569, where this subject is fully and luminously treated.

CHAP. invigorated in their opposition to it by the labours  
 III. — of Berengarius and his partisans. That the se-  
 cularies had adopted the heresy of that prelate, was  
 often urged as their reproach; and it is evident  
 from certain fragments of their reasoning on this  
 subject, which their enemies have preserved, that,  
 had the assertion been correct, the disciple must  
 have been frequently acknowledged as by no  
 means unworthy of his master. From one of  
 their adversaries, we learn, that they were accus-  
 tomed to appeal to the Apostles' Creed, and to  
 that of Nice, and Athanasius, as including every  
 important article of christian doctrine; expressing  
 their surprise, that in these summaries of religious  
 truth, no reference should be made to the matter  
 of transubstantiation, though a doctrine so greatly  
 needing the aid of external evidence to counter-  
 act, in some degree, its intrinsic, and surpassing  
 difficulties. These perplexities, also, the same  
 fraternities are described as exposing with a seve-  
 rity of criticism, which must often have be-  
 wildered their antagonists; urging with fluency  
 almost every question tending to involve the sub-  
 ject in mystery, contradiction, or absurdity.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See Prelim. View, c. i. sec. ii. The celebrated schoolman Alanus Magnus, thus describes the manner in which these contemporary heretics opposed this dogma of the church. "If the bread should be changed every day into the body of Christ, it would be infinitely increased. They inquire also whether the bread ceaseth to be, and if it ceaseth to be, then it is annihilated, and so it is spoiled. Also they ask, how a body of so great a bulk can enter into the mouth of a man? Whether the body of Christ be eaten,

"chewed with the teeth, and consequently divided into parts? Whether the bread becomes the body of Christ? because then it will really be the body of Christ—that is to say, something else than it is. Whether the bread becomes the body of Christ? because, if so, then bread will be the matter of Christ's body. Also, after transubstantiation, the accidents remain; if so they must be in another subject—as for instance, in the air. But if it be there, then some part of the

But we are principally concerned to know the fate of this doctrine in England. Our Saxon ancestors were in general sufficiently obedient to the opinions and customs of the papacy, and we may believe that the doctrine of transubstantiation was not unknown, nor wholly unapproved, by their spiritual guides. We have, however, the most decisive proof, that the dogma so named, formed no part of the national creed in the tenth century. Elfric, a contemporary of St. Dunstan, and the correspondent and associate of the principal ecclesiastics of that period, has adverted in one of his epistles to the elements of the eucharist in a manner which incidentally, but most distinctly, proscribes the doctrine of a “real presence.” This letter was addressed to Wulfstan, archbishop of York, and as its translation into the vernacular language was in compliance with the request of that prelate, it must be admitted as

CHAP.  
III.

Not recognized by the  
Anglo-Saxon  
church.

“air must be round, and savory, and  
“white; and as this form is carried  
“through divers places, so the accidents change their subject. Again,  
“these accidents abide in the same  
“part of the air, and so solidity will  
“be in the air; because they are  
“solid, and consequently the air will  
“be solid. Hence it appears that  
“these accidents are not in the air,  
“neither are they in the body of  
“Christ, neither can any other body  
“be assigned in its place, in which  
“they shall appear to be, and therefore the accidents do not merely  
“seem to remain. Again, when the  
“form or figure in which the body  
“of Christ lieth, is divided into  
“parts, the body of Christ continues  
“no longer in that figure which it had  
“before—how, therefore, can the

“body of Christ be in every part of  
“that host? Again, if the body of  
“Christ be hid in that little form,  
“where is the head, and where the  
“foot?—as a consequence his members must be undistinguishable.  
“Again, Christ gave his body to his  
“disciples before his passion. Now  
“he gave it them either mortal or immortal; yet if he gave it immortal, it is certain that then it was  
“mortal, and consequently while it is  
“really mortal it was yet immortal,  
“which is impossible.”—Alanus contra Albigenses, &c. c. l. cited in the Latin from Alauus, by Dr. Allix, in his remarks on the Churches of the Albigenses, c. xvi. 146. The above are a few only of the queries with which the heretics were accustomed to perplex the faith of the orthodox.

CHAP. a document of no mean authority.<sup>4</sup> According  
 III. to this writer, the "housel is Christ's body, not  
 "bodily, but spiritually. Not the body which  
 "he suffered in, but the body of which he spake  
 "when he blessed bread and wine, a night before  
 "his sufferings." "The apostle," he observes,  
 "has said of the Hebrews, that they all did eat  
 "the same ghostly meat, and they all did drink  
 "the same ghostly drink. And this he said, not  
 "bodily, but ghostly, Christ being not yet born,  
 "nor his blood shed when that the people of  
 "Israel ate that meat, and drank of that stone.  
 "And the stone was not bodily, though he so  
 "said. It was the same mystery in the old law,  
 "and they did ghostly signify that ghostly  
 "'housel' of our Saviour's body which we con-  
 "secrete now." In his homily, "appointed in  
 "the reign of the Saxons to be spoken unto the  
 "people at Easter," the doctrine of Elfric, and  
 of the Anglo-Saxon clergy in relation to this ser-  
 vice, is more fully exhibited. He there repeats  
 his allusion to the manna, and the rock of the  
 wilderness, and speaks of the bread in the chris-  
 tian sacrament as being the body of Christ, only  
 as the waters of baptism may be said to be the  
 divinity of the Holy Spirit. In describing the  
 difference between the body Christ suffered in,  
 and the body that is hallowed to "housel," he  
 states that the one was born of the flesh of Mary,

<sup>4</sup> The work from which I quote has the following title page: "A Testi-  
 "monie of Antiquitie, showing the  
 "auncient fayth in the church of En-  
 "gland, touching the sacrament of the  
 "body and blood of the Lord, here

"publicly preached, and also received  
 "in the Saxon tyme above 600 years  
 "ago. Printed by John Day, beneath  
 "St. Martyns, Cum Privilegio Regie-  
 "Maiestatio." 1567.

and that the other is gathered of many corns; and that “nothing therefore is to be understood therein bodily, but all is ghostly to be understood.” The bread which is farther described, as having bodily shape, is again contrasted with the body of Christ, which is said to be present, only in its “ghostly might.” The body also in which Christ rose from the dead never dieth, but the consecrated bread is declared to be temporal, not eternal. The latter is divided into parts, and some receive a larger portion, and some a less; but the body of Christ “after ghostly mystery” is undivided, and equally in all. This series of distinctions the writer concludes by observing, that the things appealing to the senses in the eucharist, are a pledge and figure, while Christ’s body is truth itself.

The authenticity of this production is beyond suspicion, and that the printed copy is correctly given from the original is attested by archbishop Parker, by his brother of York, and by the suffragans of both.

But though it is thus certain that the mystery of transubstantiation was not among the recognised doctrines of the Anglo-Saxon hierarchy, its general adoption was to be among the immediate results of the conquest. By the transfer of the English sceptre to the hand of a Norman, the political influence of the pontiffs in this island was for a while materially impeded and restrained. But Lanfranc, who filled the see of Canterbury under the first William, was the most distinguished opponent of Berengarius; and from that period, to the age of Wycliffe, the faith of the

CHAP.  
III.

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Defended  
by Lanfranc.

Espoused  
by the  
Anglo-Nor-  
man clergy.

CHAP. real presence was inculcated by the native clergy  
III. ——— without any visible opposition.<sup>5</sup>

In attempting the overthrow of this doctrine, our reformer must have been aware of the danger and suffering to which the effort would expose him. And we must presume that evils so certain and serious would hardly have been encountered, had not the error to be assailed appeared to him as fraught with impiety and abuses of the most revolting description. Of the steps which led him so to regard it, and which determined his hostile movements relating to it, we are only partially informed. It is, however, by no means surprising, that a study of the scriptures, which had been devoutly pursued through so long an interval, and which had produced a renunciation of so many established opinions, should issue in the abandonment of a doctrine, containing the grossest of the insults, which priests, in their insolence of triumph, had bestowed on the prostrate capacities of their victims. Of the spirit with which Wycliffe addressed himself to this contest, we may judge from the following extract, which forms the introduction to one of his most popular pieces on the subject. “ For-  
“ asmuch as our Saviour, Jesus Christ, with the  
“ prophets who were before him, and the apostles  
“ who were presently with him, whom he also left  
“ after him, and whose hearts were mollified by  
“ the Holy Ghost—have warned us, and given us  
“ knowledge that there are two manners of ways,  
“ the one to life, the other to death, therefore pray

<sup>5</sup> Mosheim, ii. 560.

“ we heartily to God, that he, of his mere mercy, CHAP.  
 “ will so strengthen us with the grace and stedfast- III.  
 “ ness of his Holy Spirit, as to make us strong in  
 “ spiritual living according to the gospel, that so  
 “ the world—no not the very infidels, papists, nor  
 “ apostates, may gather any occasion to speak  
 “ evil of us ; that we may enter into that strait  
 “ gate as Christ our Saviour, and all that follow  
 “ him have done, not in idle living, but in diligent  
 “ labouring—yea in great sufferance of persecu-  
 “ tion, even to the death.”<sup>6</sup>

It was with sentiments thus devout, and a purpose thus matured, that Wycliffe commenced his attack on the received doctrine concerning the eucharist. The weakness and the contradictions inseparable from that tenet, would have been of themselves sufficient to justify a zealous opposition ; but in the view of the reformer, the sin of the officiating priest was less the result of inattention than of impiety, and such as rendered him a false guide to the community, conducting his followers into the snares of a ruinous idolatry. The doctrine promulgated by Wycliffe on this point, is of such frequent occurrence in the course of his sermons, as to render it probable that it had been broached from the pulpit, prior to its admission into his lectures at Oxford. In these, however, a laborious prominence was assigned to it in the spring of 1381.<sup>7</sup> Twelve conclusions were then published, in which he challenged the attention of the members of the university to his

<sup>6</sup> MS. *Ostiolum Wiclevi*. This piece was printed at Norenberch, in 1546,

under the title of *Wycliffe's Wicket*.  
<sup>7</sup> Wood, 188. Lewis, c. vi.



CHAP. exposition of this sacrament.<sup>8</sup> In these, while  
III. — admitting that the words of consecration conferred a peculiar, and even a mysterious dignity on the bread and wine, it was most distinctly stated that those elements were not to be considered, “as Christ, or as any part of him,” but “as an effectual sign of him.” To the easy faith of the majority, in that age, few things in religion could occur as difficult if sanctioned by the church. With others, it was a matter of strange perplexity, that the sensible qualities which had distinguished the bread of the eucharist previous to its consecration, should continue to all human perception precisely unaltered after that mystic ceremony had been performed. To counteract this inconvenient verdict of the senses, the genius of the mendicants struck out a new path in logical science. They affirmed that an accident, or the property of an object, as its whiteness, or its roundness, may be supposed to exist, even when the object itself had ceased to be. The discernment of Wycliffe was so deeply offended by this hardy assertion, that his writings from this period abound with allusions to it; nor does he hesitate to denounce it as an absurdity betraying so much fraudulence of temper, as to render its abettors altogether unworthy of the public confidence. In the conclusions now published, this favourite dogma of his old antagonists was especially condemned.

It will be supposed, that a tenet which artifice had rendered so subservient to the interests of the

<sup>8</sup> Appendix, No. II.



priesthood, was not thus assailed without exciting the most serious opposition. It appears, also, that much the larger portion of the honours of the university was possessed at this time by the religious orders, notwithstanding the various attempts to reduce their influence. The chancellor, William de Berton,—whether awed by their power, or truly alarmed by the intrepidity of Wycliffe, became a party to measures, which were speedily adopted with a view to prevent the diffusion of the new doctrine. In a convention of twelve doctors, eight of whom were either monks or mendicants, the reformer was represented as teaching, that in the sacrament of the altar, the substance of material bread and wine remained without change after the words of consecration were pronounced; and that in the same venerable sacrament, there is the body and blood of Christ, not essentially, nor substantially, nor even bodily, but figuratively or tropically—so that Christ is not there truly, or verily in his own bodily presence. To pass a sentence of reprobation upon opinions, which so completely destroyed the mystery of transubstantiation, would be the ready determination of such an assembly. It was accordingly agreed to describe these novelties as erroneous, as opposed to the decisions of the church, and to state it as the true doctrine of the eucharist, “that by the sacramental words, duly pronounced by the priest, the bread and wine upon the altar are transubstantiated, or substantially converted into the true body and blood of Christ—so that after consecration, there is not in that venerable sacrament the

CHAP.  
III.

Condemnation of the doctrine of Wycliffe.

CHAP. " material bread and wine which before existed,  
 III. " considered in their own substances or natures,  
 " but only the species of the same, under which  
 " are contained the true body of Christ, and his  
 " blood, not figuratively, nor tropically, but es-  
 " sentially, substantially, and corporally—so that  
 " Christ is verily there in his own proper bodily  
 " presence." To protect these dogmas from the  
 process of investigation with which they were  
 now threatened, it was resolved that the sentence  
 of the greater excommunication, suspension from  
 all scholastic exercises, and the forfeiture of per-  
 sonal liberty, should be incurred by any member  
 of the University, who either in the schools or  
 out of them, should inculcate the opinions pub-  
 lished by Wycliffe. The same penalties were  
 also adjudged, to such as should be convicted  
 of listening to any defence of " the two aforesaid  
 " erroneous assertions."<sup>9</sup>

The meeting in which these resolutions were  
 adopted appears to have been privately convened.  
 The reformer was in the school of the Augus-  
 tinians, seated in his chair as professor, and lec-  
 turing amidst his pupils on this very doctrine,  
 when a messenger entered the apartment, who, in  
 the name of the chancellor, and of the divines his  
 coadjutors, pronounced the above sentence re-  
 lating to the sacrament of the altar, and such as  
 should favour the recent heresies on that subject.

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix, No. III. Leland, *De Script. Brit.* 379. Sir R. Twisden refers to the above censures, in support of this doctrine, as " the first plenary  
 " determination of the church of En-  
 " gland" respecting it; and accordingly

concludes that " the opinion of tran-  
 " substantiation, that brought so many  
 " to the stake, had not more than a  
 " hundred and forty years' prescription  
 " before Martin Luther."—*Historical Vindication*, 193, 194.

Wycliffe paused, as if taken by surprise, and in doubt as to the best mode of resisting the hostility which had so suddenly assumed this formidable shape. But a moment was sufficient to restore his confidence;—he then rose, complained of this substitution of brute force in the place of reason, and challenged the collected strength of his opponents to a fair refutation of his published opinions. He had often declared it to be the duty of the magistrate to protect the life, the property, and in all such cases as the present, the personal freedom of the subject. On this maxim he was now resolved to act with a firmness not inferior to that of his adversaries. The alternative placed before him, was silence or imprisonment; and the chancellor was therefore informed, that since it was resolved to punish the persons who should avow his doctrine with civil penalties, it was his own determination to appeal from the decision of his present judges to the protection of the civil power. *They* were looking to that power to crush opinion and investigation; *he* would look to it for an opposite purpose.<sup>10</sup>

His appeal  
to the civil  
power.

A considerable interval, however, was to elapse before the meeting of the next parliament, and it is probable that during that period the lectures of the reformer, as divinity professor, were devoted to topics less dangerous to his personal liberty. The prohibition of the chancellor, however, would be limited to the sphere of his particular jurisdiction, and it is to be observed, that even within the University, it referred only to oral communication. Wycliffe's province as rector of Lutterworth, was

<sup>10</sup> *Sadbury's Register*, in *Wilkins*, iii. 170, 171.

CHAP. still open, and the partial silence imposed on his  
 III. lips, would naturally impart an additional industry  
 Analysis of to his pen. His piece, intitled, *The Wicket*, was  
 his *Wicket*. composed during this crisis. Before proceeding to the discussion which it was intended to embrace, the writer feelingly adverts to the treatment which he had recently experienced from “clerks of the law.” “These,” he observes, “have ever been against God the Lord, both in “the old law, and in the new; slaying the prophets which spake to them the words of God. “Yea, they spared not the Son of God, when the “temporal judge would have delivered him. And “so forth of the apostles and martyrs who have “spoken truly of the word of God.” Thus, as the great foes of truth, instead of occupying the foreground in its defence, they are said to have denounced it as “heresy to speak of the holy “scriptures in English;” and the same cause is said to have produced “the law which they have “made on the sacred host.” In the latter, “the “falsest belief” is declared to be inculcated, and of those who bow to its authority, worshipping the consecrated bread, it is inquired, “Where “find you that ever Christ, or any of his apostles “worshipped it?” Appealing to the ancient creeds which assert the eternity and immutability of the Saviour’s existence, he demands with solemnity, “may the thing made, turn again, and make him “who made it? Thou then, that art an earthly “man, by what reason mayest thou say that thou “makest thy Maker?” Leaving this difficulty to be solved by the wisdom of orthodoxy, he next inquires, whether the body understood to be made

by the priest at the altar, must be considered as that of the Redeemer, previous or subsequent to his resurrection. If it be said to be the spiritual body in which he ascended to the Father, that, according to the scriptures, "the heavens must receive until the restitution of all things." If it be the body of Christ previous to his dissolution, then is it one which has yet to die, since the scriptures which speak of his incarnation, speak no less distinctly of his agony and death. From this dilemma, the reformer proceeds to object to the received interpretation of the words, "This is my body." These he contends, are improperly regarded as being at all the words of consecration, since it is evident, from the mode of their introduction in the gospel, that they related simply to the act of distribution. "Seek ye busily," he writes, "if ye can find two words of blessing or giving of thanks wherewith Christ made his body and blood of the bread and wine. For if ye might once find out those words, then should ye wax great masters above Christ, and then ye might be givers of his substance, and as fathers, and makers of him, he should worship you, as it is written, 'Thou shalt worship thy father and thy mother.' Of such as desire such worship against the law of God, speaks St. Paul, when writing of the Man of sin, that advanceth himself as he were God. Whether our clergy be guilty of this, judge ye, or they who know most." The conclusion resulting from this doctrine, he remarks, is, "that the thing which is not God to-day, shall be God to-morrow—yea, that the thing which is without spirit of life, but

CHAP.  
III.

CHAP. "groweth in the field by nature, shall another  
III. "time be God! and still we ought to believe,  
"that God is without beginning and without  
"ending!" The men who could be insensible to  
these impossibilities, or perceiving them, were so  
impious as to pretend to believe the doctrine  
which involved them, are reminded of the Mosaic  
account of the creation, and are required to  
imitate that achievement of Deity, before they  
pretend to give existence to his attributes. "If  
"ye cannot make the works which he made,  
"how," it is demanded, "shall ye make Him who  
"made them?" To avoid the difficulty which  
arose from teaching that each portion of the sa-  
cramental bread became the undivided body of  
Christ, it was usual to remark, that though a  
glass should be broken into a multitude of pieces,  
yet each fragment retained the power of reflecting  
the same countenance. But this unfortunate  
exercise of ingenuity is noticed by the reformer  
as favourable to *his* doctrine, and at variance with  
that of his opponents, since in every such frag-  
ment, "it is not the very face, but the figure  
"thereof" which is perceptible, "and just so," it is  
observed, "the bread is the figure of Christ's  
"body." And as the Redeemer meant not a  
material cup when that term was employed by  
him in the agony of the garden, and in his pre-  
vious address to the sons of Zebedee, it is affirmed  
to be reasonable that we attach a figurative mean-  
ing to certain of his expressions which occur in  
connexion with the last supper. With the fol-  
lowing paragraphs the work concludes. "There-  
"fore let every man wisely, with meek prayers,

“ and great study, and also with charity, read CHAP.  
III.  
 “ the words of God, and holy scriptures. But  
 “ many of you are like the mother of Zebedee’s  
 “ children, to whom Christ said, ‘ Thou wottest not  
 “ what thou askest.’ You wot not what ye ask,  
 “ nor what ye do.’ For if ye did, ye would not  
 “ blaspheme God as ye do, setting an alien god,  
 “ instead of the living God. Christ saith, ‘ I am  
 “ a very vine.’ Wherefore worship ye not the  
 “ vine for God, as ye do the bread? Wherein was  
 “ Christ a very vine? or wherein was the bread  
 “ Christ’s body? It was in figurative speech,  
 “ which is hidden to the understanding of sinners.  
 “ And thus, as Christ became not a material nor  
 “ an earthly vine, nor a material vine the body of  
 “ Christ, so neither is material bread changed  
 “ from its substance to the flesh and blood of  
 “ Christ. Have you not read that when Christ  
 “ came into the temple, they asked of him what  
 “ token he would give that they might believe him,  
 “ and he answered, ‘ Cast down this temple, and  
 “ in three days I will raise it again,’ which words  
 “ were fulfilled in his rising from the dead. But  
 “ when he said, ‘ Undo this temple,’ in that he  
 “ meant thus, they were deceived, for they under-  
 “ stood it fleshly, and thought that he had spoken  
 “ of the temple at Jerusalem, because he stood in  
 “ it. And therefore, at his passion, they accused  
 “ him full falsely, for he spake of the temple of  
 “ his blessed body, which rose again on the third  
 “ day. And just so Christ spake of his holy body,  
 “ when he said, ‘ This is my body which shall be  
 “ given for you,’ which was given to death, and  
 “ unto rising again to bliss for all that shall be



CHAP. III. “ saved by him. But just as they falsely ac-  
 ——— cused him respecting the temple of Jerusalem,  
 “ so, now-a days, they accuse falsely against  
 “ Christ, and say that he spake of the bread which  
 “ he brake among his apostles. For in that  
 “ Christ said this figuratively they are deceived,  
 “ taking it fleshly, and turning it to the material  
 “ bread, as the Jews did in the matter of the  
 “ temple. And on this foul misunderstanding they  
 “ make ‘ the abomination of discomfort,’ which is  
 “ spoken of by the prophet Daniel, as standing  
 “ in the holy place.—He that readeth, let him  
 “ understand. Now, therefore, pray we heartily  
 “ to God, that this evil time may be made short  
 “ for the sake of the chosen men, as he hath  
 “ promised in his holy gospel, and that the large  
 “ and broad way that leadeth to perdition may  
 “ be stopped, and that the strait and narrow way  
 “ that leadeth to bliss may be made open by the  
 “ holy scriptures, that we may know what is  
 “ the will of God, to serve him with certainty  
 “ and holiness, and in fear, that we may find by  
 “ him the way of bliss everlasting.” Such was  
 the doctrine of Wycliffe, in relation to the eucha-  
 rist. As the person who is raised to prelatical  
 or princely dignity is still a man, so it was af-  
 firmed, the bread, exalted as it may be from the  
 purposes to which it is applied in the sacrament  
 of the altar is, in every property, what it pre-  
 viously was; and the doctrine of transubstantia-  
 tion is accordingly treated as the strange result of  
 attaching a literal import to metaphorical expres-  
 sions.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Trialogus, lib. iv. c. iv. vii.



It will be in the recollection of the reader, that the summer of 1381 became memorable from the insurrection of the commons,<sup>12</sup> and that Wycliffe's public opposition to the tenet now adverted to commenced about the same period. On the 14th of June, in that year, the see of Canterbury became vacant by the death of Simon Sudbury; and in the October following, it was filled by Courtney, previously bishop of London. The translation of this prelate was secured by a bull of Urban the sixth, and the obligation thus conferred on the new primate, by his ecclesiastical sovereign, increased his scrupulous submission to the pleasure of the papacy. Until the pall, which custom had rendered the badge of his present dignity, was procured from Rome, the jurisdiction of his see and its usual insignia were declined. But this ornament obtained, the archiepiscopal staff was assumed; and the ecclesiastic, who, as bishop of the capital, had shewn the most zealous opposition to the opinions of our reformer, avowed his determination to employ the whole of his more extended influence to complete their extirpation.<sup>13</sup>

Early in May, in the year 1382, this "pillar of the church," as he was described by the orthodox, deemed himself canonically invested with the primacy, and two days subsequent a parliament was convened at Westminster. The mandates of the archbishop were immediately issued, calling a synod to deliberate as to the decisions proper to be adopted with regard to certain strange and

Proceedings  
of Courtney.

<sup>12</sup> From the proclamation in Rymer, vii. 311, it appears that the storm

began to lower early in the spring.

<sup>13</sup> Wake's State of the Church, 313.

CHAP. dangerous opinions said to be widely diffused,  
 III. “as well among the nobility as the commons of

“this realm of England.” On the seventeenth of the same month, an assembly was accordingly convened, including eight prelates, fourteen doctors of the civil, and of the canon law, six bachelors of divinity, fifteen mendicants, and four monks.

Synod at  
 the Grey  
 Friars, May  
 17, 1382.

A residence of the grey friars in the metropolis was the place of meeting; and the policy of the archbishop appears to have been, to procure a formal condemnation of the tenets of the reformers, and then to commence an unsparing prosecution of such as should hesitate to renounce them. Nor was this mode of procedure more vigorously chosen than pursued. It happened, however, that the synod had scarcely approached the matters to be adjusted by its wisdom, when the city was shaken by an earthquake. The courage of the parties assembled was so far impaired by this event, that some ventured to express their doubts whether the object before them might not be displeasing to heaven, and it began to be uncertain whether the meeting would not dissolve without coming to any decision. But the ready genius of the primate who presided, conferred a different meaning on the incident, comparing the dispersion of noxious vapours, produced by such convulsions, with the purity which should be secured to the church, as the result of the present struggle to remove the pestilent from her communion. The courage of the wavering being thus restored, twenty-four conclusions were read as those which had been preached, “generally, commonly, and publicly,

“ ——— through the province of Canterbury, and CHAP.  
 “ the realm of England.” After the “ good deli- III.  
 “ beration ” of three days, it was agreed, that ten  
 of these conclusions were heretical, and the re-  
 maining were declared to be erroneous.

The statements condemned as heretical related to the sacrament of the altar as including no change in the substance of the bread and wine—to priests and bishops as forfeiting their power, as such, by yielding to deadly sin—to auricular confession as unnecessary—to clerical endowments as unlawful—and to the claims of a depraved pontiff as derivable from the edicts of the emperor, but not from the gospel. In the propositions described as erroneous, the accused are made to say, that a prelate excommunicating any man without knowing him to be so judged of God, is himself a heretic, and excommunicated—that to prohibit appeals from the tribunal of the clergy to that of the king, is to incur the guilt of treason—that priests and deacons are all empowered to preach the gospel without waiting for the sanction of popes or prelates—that to forego this service from the fear of clerical censures, must be to appear as a traitor to God in the day of doom—that temporal lords may deprive an offending clergy of their possessions—that tythes are merely alms, to be yielded to the clergy only as they are devout men, and according to the discretion of the contributors—and finally, that the institutions of the religious are in themselves sinful, and tend in many ways to the injury of piety.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Wilkins, iii. 157. Lewis, c. vi. Lewis, states that the earthquake noticed in the preceding page took place

CHAP.  
III.Progress of  
persecution.

That some of these doctrines were correctly attributed to the avowed disciples of Wycliffe, will not be disputed, but others appear to have derived a part of their complexion from the prejudice of adversaries. The pomp, however, of that authority which had condemned the whole, is frequently appealed to in vindication of the measures which were now adopted to suppress them. Courtney was fully aware, that the university, which had so long been the residence of our reformer, was scarcely more fertile of heresy than the metropolis of the kingdom. A letter was accordingly addressed to the bishop of London, in which, having announced himself as metropolitan of all England, and legate of the apostolic see, the archbishop laments, that in contempt of certain canons which had wisely restricted the office of preaching, whether publicly or privately, to such as are sanctioned by the holy see, or by their prelates, many were every where found teaching doctrines subversive of the whole church, “infecting many well-meaning  
“christians, and causing them to wander grievously from the catholic communion, without  
“which there is no salvation.” The bishop is then reminded of the high authority by which the propositions referred to had been declared heretical and false; and he is, in conclusion, exhorted, in common with all his brethren suffragans of Canterbury, “To admonish, and warn, that no  
“man do henceforth hold, preach, or defend the

about one o'clock in the forenoon of the Wednesday previous to Whitsuntide, which was May 30th. (c. vi. 106.)

This was probably a second convulsion, for the meeting of the synod took place nearly a fortnight earlier.

“foresaid heresies, and errors, or any of them.” CHAP.  
III.  
To secure this object it is required, that neither himself, nor his brethren in the prelacy, do admit any suspected persons to the liberty of preaching—that they listen not to the abettors of the above pernicious tenets—that they lean not to them, either publicly or privately, but rather shun them as serpents who diffuse pestilence and poison—and that this be done on pain of the greater excommunication, that being the sentence denounced on all, and every one, who shall be found in these things disobedient.<sup>15</sup>

That the greater publicity might be given to this crusade against heresy, it was arranged, that during the ensuing Whitsuntide, a religious procession should pass through the streets of London. On the appointed day, the attention of the populace was arrested by numbers of the clergy and laity moving bare-footed towards St. Paul's. There a carmelite friar ascended the pulpit, and informed the mourning multitude of their duty with regard to the church and her enemies at this foreboding crisis. But it has appeared that the commands of the archbishop, which doubtless produced this edifying spectacle, were not only addressed to the bishop of the metropolis, but to the whole of the prelates his suffragans. A copy of the primate's letter was, accordingly, conveyed to Wycliffe's diocesan, the bishop of Lincoln; and to secure a speedy and certain execution of its instructions, official documents were immediately addressed by this prelate to the abbots and priors, and the different officers, even to the

<sup>15</sup> Fox. Acts and Monuments, i. 569. Knighton, 2650, 2651.

CHAP. III. rectors, vicars, and parochial chaplains, throughout the district to which the church of Lutterworth pertained. That church is described, as in the deanery of Goodlaxton, in the archdeaconry of Leicester. And it will be presumed, that while every clergyman in the neighbourhood of the reformer was thus canonically admonished of his obligations in relation to the heresy of the times, Wycliffe himself would not fail to receive his share of the salutary warning. There were causes, however, by which the proceedings meditated against him were for a while delayed.<sup>16</sup>

Connected with these attempts to diffuse a spirit of persecution through the provinces by the agency of the prelates, were similar efforts with respect to the seats of learning. At this period one Peter Stokes, a carmelite, and a doctor of divinity, had distinguished himself, in Oxford, by the ardour with which he had opposed the new opinions. His conduct in this particular procured him the notice and the patronage of the archbishop, who, in a letter, dated a week subsequent to the meeting at the Grey Friars, enjoins it upon the zealous mendicant to publish the decisions of that assembly through the university. In this document, which is nearly a transcript of that sent to the bishops, the primate adverts to the contempt of all episcopal sanctions observable in the conduct of the new preachers; to their doctrine as subversive of the faith in which alone there is salvation; and to the high authority of the synod by which their novelties had been condemned; and proceeding to inculcate, that to refuse the

<sup>16</sup> Knighton, 2650. Fox. Acts and Monuments, ubi supra. Lewis.

needful aid for saving men from destruction, is to become chargeable with their blood, he commands that the persons maintaining the heresies and errors specified, be holden in the strictest abhorrence, under the penalty of the great anathema.<sup>17</sup>

CHAP.  
III.

It was of little avail, however, to dispatch such instructions to the university, while its chancellor, and so large a portion of its members, were the secret, if not the open adherents of the persecuted. That office, which in the preceding year had been sustained by William de Berton, was now filled by Robert Rigge, a scholar who exposed himself to much inconvenience and suffering from his attachment to certain of the reformer's opinions. In the records of this period, the name of Dr. Nicholas Hereford is also of frequent occurrence, as that of a principal follower of Wycliffe. Before the assembling of the late synod, this divine, to use the language of the primate, had been "vehemently suspected of heresy." At this moment, however, and while the inquisitorial purposes of the archbishop were sufficiently known, Hereford is called by the chancellor to preach before the university; and the service which thus devolved upon him was deemed the most honourable of its class through the year. A similar mark of approbation, it appears, was conferred, at about the same period, on Ralph Rippington, who was also doctor of divinity, and equally an admirer of Wycliffe; and the discourses of both are described as containing a passionate eulogy on the character and the

Wycliffe favoured by  
the university.

<sup>17</sup> See Appendix, No. IV.



CHAP. general doctrine of the reformer. But this exer-  
 III. cise of the chancellor's authority was instantly reported to the archbishop, and an expostulatory letter was suddenly dispatched, advising a more dutiful employment of his influence. It required him indeed to loathe the opinions and the intercourse "of these presumptuous men," and, as he would not himself be suspected of heretical pravity, to afford immediate aid to Peter Stokes, that the letters possessed by him might be duly published, and that the reign of a sect, against which the king and the lords had promised to unite their authority, might at length be brought to its close.<sup>18</sup>

Circumstances at this moment unfriendly to the efforts of the reformers.

The statement of the primate, as to the intentions of the court, was not without foundation. Richard was now in the sixteenth year of his age. The failure of some martial preparations, which engaged the attention of his government during the earlier period of his reign, involved his exchequer in the most serious difficulties. And the efforts of his ministers to extricate the vessel of the state, served only to increase its perils, until an insurrection, and such as had been hitherto unknown in our history, threatened the extinction of every privileged order in the kingdom. The zeal and ingenuity of such churchmen as the present archbishop, would not be slow in suggesting to the young monarch, that the convulsions which had recently shaken the kingdom must be expected to return; and, that their object in some evil hour must be achieved, should the present rector of Lutterworth, and his numerous disciples be allowed to continue their appeal to

<sup>18</sup> Fox. Acts, &c.



the passions of the populace. Under the known CHAP.  
disaffection of the commons, it became, also, a III.  
point of peculiar moment to propitiate the clergy. Their wealth might enable the government to abolish, or at least to abridge, that system of taxation, which had recently goaded the people into madness. Lancaster, too, who during the late commotions, had been employed in treating with the Scots on the border, had shared much in the resentment of the insurgents. And there were other causes which rendered him far from acceptable to the existing ministry. Thus favourable was the crisis to a nearer alliance between the mitre and the crown. Nor should it be forgotten, that the family of the ecclesiastic now raised to the primacy of the English church, possessed considerable influence with a large body of the nobility of the age.<sup>19</sup> A few months only had passed, since the blood of the commons had been freely shed, as the price of their transient ascendancy; and though the king proceeded so far as to submit to his next parliament the propriety of wholly abolishing the service of villanage, and the house of commons declared the late insurrection to be wholly chargeable on the government, almost the only immediate consequence of that convulsion appears to have been, to supply the tyrannical with new facts by which to enforce the usual pleas for oppression.

<sup>19</sup> Barne's Edward the Third, 904. He was fourth son of Hugh Courtney, earl of Devonshire, by Margaret, daughter of Humphry Bohun, earl of Hereford and Essex, by his wife Elizabeth, daughter of Edward the

first. Lewis, c. iv. 58. Gibbon has given an extended notice of the honours which centred in this family, in the eleventh volume of his history, 287—300.

CHAP.  
III.

It is at this moment, so auspicious to their cause, that the English clergy unite in preferring to the sovereign and the court, a series of complaints against the doctrine and practices of the followers of Wycliffe. With a view also to increase the odium so industriously bestowed upon the disciples of the reformer, they were now designated Lollards,<sup>20</sup>—a name which had long distinguished certain sectaries on the continent, to whom, after the custom of the times, almost every thing degrading had been imputed. The persons in England, who, from this period, were classed with those injured people, are described by the prelates, abbots, and friars, representing the hierarchy, as teaching—that since the time

<sup>20</sup> Fox, i. 578. There are few minor points in ecclesiastical history on which a greater diversity of opinion has prevailed, than with respect to the origin of the term Lollard. The subject has received more attention from Mosheim than from any other writer known to me, and his statement is as follows: “As the clergy of this age (the fourteenth century) took little care of the sick and dying, and deserted such as were infected with those pestilential disorders which were then very frequent, some compassionate and pious persons at Antwerp formed themselves into a society for the performance of those religious offices which the sacerdotal orders so shamefully neglected. Pursuant to this agreement, they visited and comforted the sick, assisted the dying with their prayers and exhortations, took care of the interment of those who were cut off by the plague, and on that account forsaken by the affrighted clergy, and committed them to the grave

“with a solemn funeral dirge. It was with reference to this last office, that the common people gave them the name of Lollards. The example of these good people had such an extensive influence, that in a little time societies of the same sort of Lollards, consisting both of men and women, were formed in most parts of Germany and Flanders, and were supported partly by their manual labours, and partly by the charitable donations of pious persons.” Hist. iii. 355—358. But the existence of such societies reflected on the character of the clergy, and impaired the resources of the mendicants; and every art was accordingly resorted to for the purpose of rendering them odious. Such too was the success of these efforts, that the name, though so reputable in its origin, came to be descriptive of all persons who were thought to conceal enormous vices under the appearance of sanctity. See a curious notice from Mosheim on this subject, at the end of the volume. Note B.

of Silvester, there has been no true pope, and that the last to whom that name should be given is the existing pontiff, Urban the sixth; that the power of granting indulgences, and of binding and loosing, as claimed by ecclesiastics, is a delusion, and that those who confide in it are in consequence accursed; that auricular confession is a superfluous service; that the bishop of Rome has no legislative authority in the christian church; that the invocation of saints is an unauthorized custom; that the worship of images or pictures is idolatry, and that the miracles attributed to them are false; that the clergy are bound to reside on their benefices, and not to farm them to others, and that such as fail in these duties should be degraded as wasters of the goods of the church; and, finally, that the pomp of the higher orders of the priesthood should be in all things done away, and their doctrine as to the vanity of the world be enforced by example. Doctrines at all of this character could not have been widely disseminated, without deeply irritating the men to whose pretensions they were so explicitly opposed.

By their present appeal, the clergy obtained the sanction of the king, and of certain lords, to a statute which occurs as the first in our parliamentary history, providing for the punishment of the variable crime designated heresy. For this reason, and as it farther discloses the energy and activity with which Wycliffe's "poor priests" were now prosecuting their plans of reform, it is here inserted without abridgement. "Foras-

Persecuting  
statute sur-  
reptitiously  
obtained by  
the clergy.

"much as it is openly known, that there are

CHAP. III. “ divers evil persons within the realm going from  
“ county to county, and from town to town, in  
“ certain habits, under dissimulation of great holi-  
“ ness, and without the licence of the ordinaries  
“ of the places, or other sufficient authority,  
“ preaching daily, not only in churches, and  
“ churchyards, but also in markets, fairs, and  
“ other open places, where a great congregation  
“ of people is, divers sermons, containing heresies,  
“ and notorious errors, to the great blemishing  
“ of the christian faith, and destruction of the  
“ laws and estate of holy-church, to the great  
“ peril of the souls of the people, and of all the  
“ realm of England, (as more plainly is found,  
“ and sufficiently proved, before the reverend  
“ father in God, the archbishop of Canterbury,  
“ and the bishops and other prelates, masters of  
“ divinity, and doctors of canon and of civil law,  
“ and a great part of the clergy of the same realm  
“ especially assembled for this cause,) which per-  
“ sons do also preach divers matters of slander, to  
“ engender discord and dissension between divers  
“ estates of the said realm, as well spiritual as  
“ temporal, in exciting of the people to the great  
“ peril of all the realm; which preachers being  
“ cited or summoned before the ordinaries of the  
“ places, there to answer to that whereof they be  
“ impeached, they will not obey to their summons  
“ and commandments, nor care for their moni-  
“ tions, nor for the censures of holy-church, but  
“ expressly despise them; and moreover, by  
“ their subtle and ingenious words do draw the  
“ people to hear their sermons, and do maintain  
“ them in their errors, by strong hand, and by

“ great routs. It is therefore ordained and as-  
 “ sented in this present parliament, that the  
 “ king’s commissions be made and directed to the  
 “ sheriffs, and other ministers of our sovereign lord  
 “ the king, or other sufficient persons learned, and  
 “ according to the certifications of the prelates  
 “ thereof, to be made in the chancery from time  
 “ to time, to arrest all such preachers, and also  
 “ their fautors, maintainers, and abettors, and to  
 “ hold them in arrest and strong prison, till they  
 “ will justify themselves according to the law and  
 “ reason of holy-church. And the king willeth  
 “ and commandeth, that the chancellor make  
 “ such commissions at all times, that he, by the  
 “ prelates, or any of them, shall be certified, and  
 “ thereof required, as is aforesaid.”<sup>21</sup>

By this document, invalid as it was in point of law, much was done toward rendering the magistracy through the kingdom, the passive instruments of that “ holy office ” which the scheme was meant to establish in every diocese. Courtney felt no delicacy in describing himself, as “ chief inquisitor of heretical pravity for the province of Canterbury ; ” and to him, the success of such a plan would, of course, have been singularly grateful. That the suspected through the nation, might be placed under immediate “ arrest, “ and in strong prison,” the force at the command of the sheriffs, was to be subject, in every place, and at every season, to the bidding of the prelates ; and no process instituted was to terminate,

<sup>21</sup> This document, and those from which the remaining facts of this chapter are mostly derived, may be

seen in Fox, 575 — 580. See also Wilkins. Concilia, iii. ubi supra, and Lewis.

CHAP. III. except as the parties accused should “justify themselves according to the law, and the reason, “of holy-church.” And if it be remembered, that our statute book had not hitherto included the remotest provision for correcting religious opinions, the matured form in which this oppressive policy was introduced must be viewed as bespeaking no mean confidence of strength on the part of the ruling clergy.

The facts adverted to, are also widely at issue with the theory which transfers the odium of the atrocious persecutions so frequent in ancient Christendom to the temper of the magistrate, or to the maxims which had become incorporated with the policy of princes before the diffusion of the gospel. In the annals of our own country, it is plain that the laity were indebted to the clergy for their first attempt to enforce the doctrines of their religion by the terrors of the dungeon and the stake; and it is not less certain, that the zeal which first taught them to prize the scent of blood, propelled them in the chase.

The attention of the primate, on thus obtaining the aid of the magistrate, was first directed to 1382. Oxford. The synod which had separated on the twenty-first of May, was convened again, in the chamber of the preaching friars, on the twelfth of June; and Robert Rigge, the chancellor of the university, and William Brightwell, a doctor of divinity, appeared at the place of meeting, to answer respecting their late conduct in favour of Hereford and Rippington; and, also, as to their opinion concerning the “aforesaid “articles.” Rigge was a zealous advocate of

the university, as an establishment which should be less subject to the control of the ecclesiastical than of the civil power; and hence was strongly opposed to the religious orders, who were concerned that it should be subject to the authority of the primate, as legate of the apostolic see. Our reformer had distinguished himself in the same cause. But while the chancellor certainly admired the character of Wycliffe, it is probable that his admiration did not extend to every tenet which the reformer was known to advocate. Before the synod, indeed, he declared his assent to the judgment passed on the twenty-four articles in the previous meeting; and Brightwell, after some hesitation, was induced to follow his example. As the prospect of successful resistance began to disappear, the courage of both may have been so far subdued as to admit the partial concealment of their opinions. It is certain that a letter was now delivered by the archbishop to "his well beloved son in Christ, the chancellor of Oxford," requiring him to publish the proscribed articles, in the schools and churches, at the hours of lecturing and preaching; and to give the greater efficacy to this proclamation, it was to be made in Latin, and in the vulgar tongue. In the document containing these instructions, the names of John Wycliffe, Nicholas Hereford, Philip Ripington, John Ashton, and Lawrence Redman, occur as those of persons notoriously suspected of heresy; and adverting to these, and such as should in any way favour their persons or their doctrine, the primate writes, "we suspend the same suspected persons from all scholastic



CHAP. “ exercises, until such time as they shall have  
 III. — “ purified themselves before us ; and we require  
 “ that you publicly denounce the same to have  
 “ been, and to be, by us suspended ; and that you  
 “ diligently and faithfully search after all their  
 “ patrons and adherents, and cause inquiry to  
 “ be made respecting them through every hall in  
 “ the said university ; and that obtaining intelli-  
 “ gence of their names and persons, you do compel  
 “ all and each of them to abjure their errors  
 “ by ecclesiastical censures, and by any canonical  
 “ penalties whatsoever, under pain of the greater  
 “ anathema, the which we now denounce against  
 “ all and each who shall not be obedient ; \* \* \* \*  
 “ and the absolving of such, as may incur the  
 “ sentence of the instrument, we reserve wholly  
 “ to ourselves.” But the chancellor had scarcely  
 left the place of meeting when the suspicions of  
 the primate appear to have been renewed. In a  
 letter, dated on the same day with the above, and  
 from the same place, he informs Robert Rigge,  
 that he had learnt from credible information, and  
 partly from experience, his disposition to favour  
 “ the aforesaid damnable conclusions,” and his  
 intention to molest by his authority, the persons  
 who should oppose them in the schools of the  
 university. In consequence of this information,  
 the archbishop thus writes, “ We admonish thee,  
 “ master Robert, chancellor as before named,  
 “ the first, second, and third time, and peremp-  
 “ torily, that thou dost not grieve, hinder, nor  
 “ molest judicially, nor extra-judicially, publicly  
 “ nor privately, nor cause to be grieved, hindered  
 “ or molested, nor procure indirectly by thyself,



“ or others, to be grieved, the foresaid clerks se-  
 “ cular or regular, or such as favour them in the  
 “ points determined in their scholastic acts, or in  
 “ any other condition whatsoever.” The eccle-  
 siastics who had joined with the primate in his  
 recent process against the chancellor of Oxford,  
 were many of them members of the university.  
 On returning to that seminary, the men who had  
 lately sat in judgment upon the conduct of its  
 principal officer, would be again subject to his  
 authority, and it was deemed important to se-  
 cure them from that resentment which their  
 fears had taught them to anticipate.

The synod which we have seen convoked on  
 the nineteenth of May, and re-assembled on the  
 twelfth of June, was again convened on the eigh-  
 teenth, the twentieth, and the twenty-eighth of  
 the same month, and on the first, and twelfth, of<sup>1382.</sup>  
 the month ensuing. In each of these meetings,  
 the prosecution of Hereford and his associates was  
 continued, but with various success. The ac-  
 counts, indeed, which their enemies have trans-  
 mitted to us, are not only imperfect, but in many  
 things contradictory and improbable; and as these  
 form almost our only source of information re-  
 specting the accused, their conduct at this period,  
 and their real character, are left in a great degree  
 uncertain. Wycliffe, who at the time of these  
 proceedings, was residing at his rectory, would  
 be a close observer of movements, intended to  
 annihilate a cause which his life had been devoted  
 to create and sustain. In one of his sermons,  
 composed during this interval, he clearly refers  
 to the measures in progress against Dr. Hereford,

CHAP.  
III.

and master John Ashton. By the first our reformer appears to have been assisted in his translation of the scriptures; and he is presumed to have been the author of some English pieces, designed to forward the projected reformation of the church. Ashton was known through nearly half the kingdom as an itinerant preacher, and according to the accounts given by his adversaries, was possessed of qualifications which gave an amazing efficiency to his labours. To the doctrines of Wycliffe he is said to have annexed certain novelties of his own. Knighton, who describes his appearing in coarse attire, and with a staff in his hand, as the affectation of simplicity, bears testimony to the assiduity with which he frequented churches, and mingled in family circles, to effect the dissemination of his tenets. The same writer has preserved the outline of two sermons, said to have been delivered by this pedestrian teacher, the one at Leicester, the other at Gloucester. In these we recognize the opinions of our reformer as to the authority of the sovereign in relation to the church, the delusion and abuses of spiritual censures, the pernicious influence of religious temporalities, the unscriptural origin of distinctions among the clergy, and the folly of transubstantiation, together with a special exposure of the malignity which had always characterized crusades—those pernicious fruits of the dispensing power assumed by the priesthood. That neither the learning of Hereford, nor the ardour of Ashton might be any longer employed in diffusing sentiments so hostile to the existing order of things, both were

summoned to appear before the archbishop, who, CHAP.  
III.  
to his titles as primate, was pleased to annex the  
name of "Chief Inquisitor."<sup>22</sup>

It is while this process is pending, that Wycliffe adverts to it in one of his parochial expositions. The persecution he attributes principally to the zeal of Courtney, whom he describes, as the "great bishop of England," and as deeply incensed "because God's law is written in English, "to lewd men."<sup>23</sup> "He pursueth a certain priest," observes the preacher, "because he writeth to "men this English, and summoneth him, and tra-  
"veleth him so that it is hard for him to bear it. "And thus he pursueth another priest, by the help  
"of pharisees, because he preacheth Christ's gos-  
"pel freely, and without fables. Oh! men who  
"are on Christ's behalf, help ye now against Anti-  
"christ, for the perilous times are come which  
"Christ and Paul foretold!"<sup>24</sup> We can believe that Wycliffe's auditory would not fail to sympathize with their pastor at this foreboding moment; but according to the statements of their persecutors, the efforts made by the men who were thus feelingly adverted to, in the hope of escaping from the strong hand of their oppressors, were fruitless.

It should be remembered, however, that when authority was once appealed to, with a view to suppress the doctrine of Wycliffe, it became a point of some importance that the end proposed should, at least, *seem* to have been obtained. Hereford and Rippington, after repeated struggles to evade

<sup>22</sup> Knighton, 2655—2660. Wilkins. <sup>23</sup> "Laymen." <sup>24</sup> MS. Hom. Bib. Reg.

CHAP. any confession of their faith, are described as  
III. — at length admitting the twenty-four conclusions censured by the synod, to be, with certain explanations, partly heretical and partly false. They are said also to have stated, that in no instance had they publicly avowed the tenets which in those articles were imputed to them. Their confession, however, such as it was, proved so little satisfactory, that each member of the synod declared it to be, with respect to numerous articles, “heretical, subtle, erroneous, and perverse.” But all farther explanation of their creed was steadily refused, and for a while the terrors of excommunication were braved, though its sentence, that it might operate as a warning to the infected, was pronounced with studious pomp and publicity. Ashton conducted his defence with considerable spirit, but affirmed that he should decline answering the questions of his judges on the conclusions adduced. He was repeatedly urged to make his communications to the court in Latin, that no erroneous impression might be produced on the mind of the laity who were auditors; but the consciousness of a bad cause, and the spirit of domination which this unauthorized injunction betrayed, roused the indignation of the prisoner, and called forth an appeal to the people in their own tongue, which the archbishop deemed it important to check, by hastening the business of the day to its close. In the sentence delivered, the silence of the suspected person was regarded as the proof of guilt, and he was exposed accordingly to all the consequences of holding the censured articles.

Could we always submit to the authority of <sup>CHAP.  
III.</sup> Knighton, we should believe that Hereford and Ashton delivered written confessions to the synod on the doctrine of the eucharist, and such as contained every mystery which the priesthood had connected with it. But there is room to suspect that these papers belong to that numerous class of productions which owe their origin to pious fraud. Were they authentic, we should not have had to search in vain for them in the Courtney register, where so large a space is devoted to these proceedings. In addition to which, Ashton is made to affirm in this document, that he had never questioned the tenet of transubstantiation—a statement which, according to the historian who has adopted it, was contrary to fact, and one which must have contained a falsehood for which no motive can be assigned. And had Hereford descended to employ the language attributed to him on the same article, the rest in the series would doubtless have been disposed of in the same manner, and his escape could hardly then have been attributed, purely to the interference of the duke of Lancaster. It appears, however, that Rippington ultimately conformed to the requisitions of the church, and that after a time he endeavoured to place his orthodoxy beyond suspicion by persecuting his old associates. The dispute with Ashton, also, was subsequently so far accommodated as to admit of his returning to his scholastic exercises. But in 1387, Hereford was generally believed to be a disciple of Wycliffe; and so late as the year 1392, he solicited and obtained the protection of the court against the

CHAP. machinations of his enemies which had arisen  
 III. from that cause.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> It is from Knighton, (2657) that we learn the fact of Hereford's "escape from the bitterness of death" through the influence of the duke of Lancaster. But in 1391 we find him with the clergy who sat in judgment on the celebrated Lollard, Walter Brute. By his indecision he appears to have forfeited the confidence both of the orthodox and of their opponents, and probably his own peace of mind. The firmness of the martyr

is not the possession of every good man. Fox, i. 654. Mr. Godwin describes him as "the most refined and virtuous of the adherents of "Wycliffe." It may be that the Lollards did not possess his superior as a scholar, but in the virtues of firmness and consistency he was surpassed by many of that class. Life of Chaucer, ii. 336. Ashton is said to have died as he lived. Thorp's Examination. Wals. 328. Lewis, c. x.

## CHAPTER IV.

PERSECUTION.—WYCLIFFE'S DEVOTIONAL ALLUSION TO THE EVILS OF HIS TIME.—SUMMARY OF HIS COMPLAINT ADDRESSED TO THE KING AND PARLIAMENT.—EFFECT OF THAT APPEAL.—THE REFORMER IS FORSAKEN BY LANCASTER.—HIS PURPOSES UNALTERED BY THAT EVENT.—HIS VIGOROUS PERCEPTION OF THE BEARINGS OF THE CONTROVERSY RESPECTING THE EUCHARIST, AND HIS CONFIDENCE OF ULTIMATE SUCCESS.—HE APPEARS BEFORE THE CONVOCATION AT OXFORD.—SUBSTANCE OF HIS CONFESSION.—PERPLEXITY OF HIS JUDGES.—HE RETIRES TO LUTTERWORTH.—HIS LETTER TO THE PONTIFF.

THE history of persecution affords abundant CHAP. evidence of its general inefficacy, and of its tur- IV. pitude. That it should have pervaded the nations of Christendom so entirely, and through so long a period, is in every view humiliating. The civil penalties by which the religious obedience of the ancient Israelite was enforced, are sufficiently explained by the fact that such was the nature of the Hebrew government, that to yield to the practice of idolatry, was to incur the guilt of treason. But no second theocracy has been established. The power, accordingly, both of the sovereign and of the priest, may be presumed to have been materially affected by the departure of the Mosaic economy. The limits now assigned to the authority of each, is a subject requiring the most deliberate attention, whether viewed in connexion with the many questions which it involves, or in its practical importance. The consequences resulting

Persecution.



CHAP. from opposite decisions concerning it, have ever  
IV. — been fraught with a large amount of good or evil to mankind.

Among the heathen states of antiquity, toleration was scarcely a virtue, as the local aspect of their idolatry left the province of every existing deity undisturbed, even while new objects of worship were introduced. But the gospel was not of a character to enter into any such partnership with human inventions. On the contrary, as being alone true, it claimed an undivided empire. By its first disciples, its pretensions in this respect were fearlessly urged; nor were their nearer descendants concerned, either to deny or to conceal this peculiarity of their faith, though but too well apprised of the loathing which it had brought upon them from all the votaries of Gentile worship. In some instances, that contempt of the pomp and pleasure of the world which not unfrequently distinguished the professors of christianity in those ages, was increased and purified by the external sufferings thus incurred. But in others, the turbulence of the passions was less subdued by the better spirit of the gospel, and the violence employed to suppress the doctrines of the cross sometimes excited a re-action of the same evil temper in their support. These inflammable materials had been for some time increasing in the church, when, under Constantine, christianity was recognized as the religion of the empire. As the consequence of that event, these dangerous elements became so far dominant among the nominal professors of the gospel, as to leave the partisans of the ancient idolatry to deplore the

severity of weapons which they had recently wielded with so much freedom against its opponents. But when attempts to convince the understanding of its errors, by means of confiscations, and torture, and exile, were not only considered as rational, but when to be zealous in the application of this species of logic, was to secure, moreover, the reputation of unusual sanctity, it was not the grosser forms of heathenism merely, which would feel the disastrous influence of this strange delusion. The diversities of opinion observable among the avowed disciples of the same Master, soon attracted the critical attention of churchmen. These differences were found to be retained with much tenacity, and the obstinacy of the weak provoked the indignation of the strong. No little artifice was, in consequence, employed, to clothe the doctrine of dissentients with almost every feature of impiety—as the best method of vindicating the infliction of penalties upon them which had once been the award of idolatry. Nor is it to be doubted, that the guilt of transferring the maxims of persecution, from the policy of pagan Rome to that of the papal hierarchy, so as to render them the law both of its head and of its members, belongs, chiefly, to the higher orders of the clergy. Amid the declining civilization of the empire, the power of that class of men steadily increased, until their supremacy over the conscience of their victims was completed. It is, however, a stubborn and a melancholy fact, that with every step of their progress persecution became more systematic and relentless. The notion of divine right was by degrees connected with the regal office,

CHAP. and while monarchs, if obedient to the will of the  
IV. church, were placed on a level with the sovereigns of Judah, ecclesiastics claimed to be the representatives of Deity, and to an extent greatly surpassing any thing to which the Jewish priesthood had aspired. The ministers of the christian sanctuary being once acknowledged as the unerring interpreters of the will of Heaven, to dissent from the church, whether its judgment were interposed to enforce the claims of princes, or to determine articles of faith, was to resist the Almighty, and to fall under the double censure of the rebel and the impious. Monarchs, indeed, were sometimes slow to act on the suggestions of their pastors, as to the best mode of subduing the heresies of their people; but such as were solicitous of repose, or concerned to hold the sceptre with a steady hand, were generally induced to become the instruments of almost any scheme, which promised to the church the reverence claimed for her supposed infallibility.

It is true the civil authorities of England, previous to the age of Wycliffe, are less stained with the blood which was so freely shed for the protection of orthodoxy than were the rulers of almost every state upon the continent. But this arose simply from the circumstance, that until the former half of the fourteenth century had passed, certain encroachments in discipline formed the only matters of serious complaint. The honour of first attempting to render it a part of our statute law, that on all questions of heresy the magistrate should become the executioner of the will of the church, belongs to the zeal of the

primate Courtney. Nor was the effort wholly CHAP.  
IV. futile, though its immediate result was trivial when compared with its design. The degree of success, however, which attended this claim on the secular power, served as a precedent and a motive in the series of measures which were ere long to involve both the church and the state in all the odious consequences generally attendant on a coercive warfare with religious opinion. Wycliffe marked this tendency of events, and by his benevolent genius the progress of intolerance was for a while impeded. His declining health, or the fear, perhaps, of encountering the political influence of Lancaster, proved the security of the reformer during the late prosecution of his friends. It is stated, indeed, that Hereford and Rippington, when falling before the strength of their antagonists, solicited the protection of John of Gaunt, and that the reply of that nobleman consisted of instructions respecting the duty of submitting, in all such matters, to the decision of their ordinaries. That such an appeal was made, and that such was its result is perhaps true, but that it did not include the name of Wycliffe, may be safely inferred from his confidence in the "noble duke," as expressed in the petition which he presented immediately afterwards to the king and the parliament.

It appears, also, from a discourse composed by the reformer, about this period, that he was not ignorant of the artifice and corruption to which his adversaries had resorted, in the hope of opposing the force of the civil government to the intended reformation of religion. Commenting Wycliffe's  
devotional  
allusion to  
the evils  
of the day.

CHAP. on the entombment of Christ, and on the vain  
 IV. effort of the priests and the soldiers to prevent  
 his resurrection, the preacher adverts to the  
 measures recently adopted, both by the civil and  
 ecclesiastical authorities, with a view to consign  
 the gospel to oblivion. "Thus," he observes,  
 "do our high priests, and our new religious fear  
 " them, lest God's law, after all they have done,  
 " should be quickened. Therefore make they  
 " statutes stable as a rock, and they obtain grace  
 " of knights to confirm them, and this they well  
 " mark with the witness of lords; and all lest  
 " the truth of God's law, hid in the sepulchre,  
 " should break out to the knowing of the common  
 " people. Oh! Christ, thy law is hidden thus,  
 " when wilt thou send thine angel to remove the  
 " stone, and show thy truth unto thy flock? Well  
 " I know that knights have taken gold in this  
 " case, to help that thy law may be thus hid, and  
 " thine ordinances consumed. But well I know  
 " that at the day of doom it shall be manifest, and  
 " even before, when thou arisest against all thine  
 " enemies!"<sup>1</sup>

While such was the policy of the leading members of the hierarchy, it was obvious to Wycliffe, that nothing remained but to submit to their despotism, or to attempt a counteraction of their efforts as made to obtain the sanction of the court and the senate. Nearly sixty winters had now passed over the head of our reformer, and sickness had made a serious inroad on his physical strength—that important auxiliary of intellectual vigour and prowess. But his furrowed brow, and

<sup>1</sup> MS. Hom. Bib. Reg.

whitened hairs, were still allied to an energy CHAP.  
IV.  
 which could ill submit to a tame surrendering of ———  
 the fortress of equity, and truth, and godliness. Each step in the progress of the late persecutions, was seen as facilitating the meditated blow against himself. Should it be his lot to perish beneath the fangs of the rising tyranny, it was his resolve that his countrymen should not be ignorant of the opinions for which he suffered. In conformity with this determination, and with his message to the chancellor of Oxford some months previously, he presented a summary of the more important of his tenets, in the form of a petition, to the king and the parliament. The assembly to which this appeal was addressed, was summoned on the fifteenth of October, and met on the nineteenth of November,<sup>2</sup> and in this document it is supposed to be already convened. It appears also to have been known that in this meeting of “the great  
 “men of the realm, both seculars and men of  
 “holy-church,” the articles included in this appeal would become the matters of discussion. The doctrine thus submitted to their judgment, is said to be “proved both by authority and  
 “reason,” and this that the “christian religion  
 “may be increased, maintained, and made stable,  
 “since our Lord Jesus Christ, very God and very  
 “man, is head and prelate of this religion, and  
 “shed his precious heart’s blood, and water out  
 “of his side, on the cross, to make this religion  
 “perfect and stable, and clean without error.”<sup>3</sup>

1382.  
November.

<sup>2</sup> Fox. Acts, &c.

<sup>3</sup> MS. Ad regem et parlamentum,  
C. C. C. Cambridge, and in the Cotton

Library. It will be remembered as  
one of the two works printed by Dr.  
James in 1608.

CHAP.  
IV.

Summary of  
Wycliffe's  
"Com-  
plaint."

The articles thus introduced are four in number. The first relates to the vows of the religious, declaring them to be a device of man, and of no obligation: the second asserts that "secular lords  
" may lawfully, and meritoriously, in many cases,  
" take away temporal goods given to men of the  
" church." In the third it is affirmed that even  
tythes, and other voluntary offerings, should be  
withdrawn "from prelates, or other priests who-  
" ever they be," on their yielding to "great sins,  
" as pride, simony, and man-slaying, gluttony,  
" drunkenness, and lechery." In the last, the  
reformer prays that the doctrine of the eucharist,  
" which is plainly taught by Christ and his  
" apostles in the gospels, and epistles, might be  
" also openly taught in the churches."

Nearly half this paper is occupied in demonstrating the first of these positions; and to discern the propriety of this, it should be remembered, that the archbishop derived his most efficient aid in his present arbitrary measures, from the begging fraternities and the monks. It has appeared that the sentence which excluded every teacher of Wycliffe's doctrine concerning the eucharist from the university, was the effect of their influence; and in the synod which had since prosecuted his disciples, with all possible severity, the same order of men prevailed. It became important, therefore, in the judgment of the reformer, to shew distinctly that so far from meriting the pre-eminence conceded to them, the vows which gave to these persons their distinction were a human invention; an invention also of comparatively recent date; and injurious, in



various ways, to religion, and to the interests of society. CHAP.  
IV.

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In this memorable appeal, these points are fully proved. The writer especially adverts to the practice of the religious in forsaking one rule, deemed less perfect, to embrace another regarded as of higher sanctity. The rule of Christ, it is contended, must of necessity be the most complete, and it is thence inferred that all men should be held free from any painful consequences in relinquishing any "private sect," the contrivance of "sinful men," for the rule of the gospel. This, it is justly observed, should be the more readily admitted by the parties alluded to, as they were not slow to forget their vows of poverty and seclusion, when the attractions of a mitre were allowed to descend upon them. The change, also, which followed in such cases, is described as partaking less of an increased separation from the world, than of an actual return to it. If to all this, it should be replied, that the customs of the religious are not at variance with the institute of the Saviour and his apostles, but rather parts of it; the persons so reasoning, are called upon to name the portion of holy writ, containing the articles of discipline which have given existence to canons, and monks, and mendicants; and to expose the failure which must be attendant on the attempt to do this, various of the regulations adopted by these communities are specified. Respecting this moiety of the work, in which that momentous doctrine, the sufficiency of scripture, is maintained in the most satisfactory terms, a correct idea may be formed from the following

CHAP. extract. It is intended to exhibit the supreme  
IV.  
— authority of the inspired writings, and clearly assumes the right of private judgment. “Inasmuch  
“ as one patron or founder is more perfect, more  
“ mighty, more wise, more holy, and in more  
“ charity than another, insomuch is the first  
“ patron’s rule better and more perfect than is  
“ that of the second. But Jesus Christ, the  
“ patron of the christian religion, given to the  
“ apostles, passeth without measure, in might,  
“ and wisdom, and good-will, the perfection of  
“ every patron of any private sect—his rule is  
“ therefore more perfect. Also that Christ’s pure  
“ religion, without the addition of sinful men’s  
“ errors, is the most perfect of all, may be thus  
“ shewn. For either Christ might give such a  
“ rule, the most perfect to be kept in this life,  
“ and would not; and then he was envious—as  
“ St. Austin proveth in other matters—or else  
“ Christ would ordain such a rule, and might not;  
“ and then Christ was unmighty, but to affirm  
“ that of Christ is heresy—or else he might and  
“ could, but would not; and then he was unwise,  
“ and that is a heresy no man should consent to  
“ hear. Therefore, it is plain, that Christ both  
“ might, and could, and would ordain a rule the  
“ most perfect that should be kept in this life.  
“ And so Christ, of his endless wisdom and cha-  
“ rity, has ordained such a rule. And thus on  
“ each side men are bound, upon pain of heresy,  
“ and of blasphemy, and of condemnation, to  
“ believe and acknowledge that the religion of  
“ Jesus Christ to his apostles, and kept by them  
“ in its own freedom, without addition from sinful

“ man’s error, is the most perfect of all ; and so to  
 “ hinder no man from forsaking a private religion, CHAP.  
IV.  
 “ and keeping the pure religion of Christ.”

These reasonings are also enforced by the fact, that in the early ages, when neither monks nor friars were known, “ the church increased and “ prospered most, for then almost all men disposed “ themselves to martyrdom after the example “ of Christ.” His conclusion therefore is, that “ it “ were not only meritorious to the church now, “ but most meritorious, to live so in all things, “ and by all things.” As the consequence of these opinions with regard to the gospel, and its Author, Wycliffe claimed for himself, and others, the same liberty in adhering to the simple order said to be instituted by the Redeemer, which was conceded to such as professed to adopt some one system of man’s invention in preference to others. And had the religious been disposed to tolerate this exclusive attachment to scriptural vows of spirituality or seclusion, their own authority might have been less disturbed, and of longer continuance. But they saw this kind of profession as reflecting on every other, regarding them as innovations of yesterday, and as opposed to the veneration due to the Redeemer, who in opposition to the infallibility assumed by the church, was declared to be alone above the influence of error. Hence arose the spirit of persecution, and hence the reaction which violence rarely fails to produce.

In the second of the articles contained in this paper, the reformer combats the theory of certain friars, who had maintained on some recent and

CHAP.  
IV.  
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public occasion, that both the persons and the property of the clergy, and of the religious, were strictly beyond the jurisdiction of the sovereign. The absurdity of this fashionable doctrine the reformer had often exposed, and it is again exhibited, and principally by tracing it to its results. It is remarked that if to hold the opposite of this doctrine, “be error touching the health “ of man’s soul,” then the race of English princes, and the men who have formed the successive councils of the realm, must be viewed as among the lost. And, not to dwell on the recorded opinions of such parties, as opposed to this tenet, nor on the measures which frequently arose from them, it is observed, that if they were in error in this matter, it must then follow that should “an “ abbot and all his convent prove open traitors, “ conspiring the death of the king and the queen, “ and of other lords, and exert themselves to “ destroy the whole realm, the king may not take “ from them one halfpenny, or farthing, nor its “ worth, since all these are temporal goods. Also, “ though other clerks should send to our enemies “ all the rents which they have in our land, and “ whatever they may rob or steal of the king’s “ liege men, yet our king may not punish them “ by one farthing, nor farthing’s worth. Also, by “ this doctrine of friars, though monks or friars, “ or other clerks, whatever they be, should slay “ lords’ tenants, the king’s liege men, and dishonour lords’ wives, yea, the queen, which God “ forbid, or the empress, yet the king may not “ punish them by the loss of one farthing. Also, “ it followeth plainly, that men called men of

“ holy-church may dwell in this land at their CHAP.  
 “ liking, and do what kind of sin, and what kind IV.  
 “ of treason they like, and the king, nevertheless, ———  
 “ may not punish them, neither in their temporal  
 “ goods, nor in their bodies, since if he may not  
 “ punish them in the less, he may not in the  
 “ greater. And should they make one of them-  
 “ selves king, no secular lord may hinder him in  
 “ conquering all the secular lordships of this  
 “ earth: and these men might destroy all lords  
 “ and ladies, and their blood and affinity, without  
 “ any penalty arising in this life, either in their  
 “ body or estate. Ye lords! then see and under-  
 “ stand, with what punishing they deserve to be  
 “ punished, who thus hastily and wrongfully have  
 “ condemned you for heretics, forasmuch as you  
 “ do execution and righteousness according to  
 “ God’s law and man’s. For the chief lordship  
 “ of all temporalities in this land, both of secular  
 “ men and religious, pertains to the king, of his  
 “ general governing, or else he were not king of  
 “ all England, but merely of a little part thereof.”

This refutation of the ambitious tenet to which  
 this part of the petition refers, is farther strength-  
 ened by the language of St. Paul, respecting  
 magistracy, as “ God’s ordinance;” and it is  
 remarked, that the apostle, who “ putteth all men  
 “ in subjection to kings, out taketh never a one.”  
 From these premises, the known doctrine of our  
 reformer concerning the power of the crown, as  
 extending over the whole property of the clergy,  
 and over the persons of that order in all civil  
 affairs, is in conclusion adduced.

The third article relates to the application of

CHAP. “tythes and offerings,” as required “by God’s  
IV. ——— “law, and the pope’s law.” In this the claims of the most devoted among the clergy, are limited to the needful matters of food and clothing; while the ignorant, the indolent, or the vicious, are described as having forfeited all right to any part in the goods of the church. In support of this doctrine, the writer appeals to the conduct of Tobit, in withholding his offerings from the priests of Jeroboam, and rendering them to the true descendants of Aaron, who resided at Jerusalem; to the story of Eli and his sons; and to the advice of Paul in his letters to Timothy. From the authorities of a subsequent date, the names of Jerome, Augustine, and of Gregory the great, are cited, together with those of Bernard and Grossteste, all as more or less favourable to the position advanced. Two things are said, in conclusion, to follow from what is thus introduced. First, that if curates do not their office in word and example as God has commanded, their people are under no obligation to pay them tythes and offerings, since the end for which such payments are made is wanting: secondly, that curates are more guilty in withholding their teaching by word and example, than their parishioners would be in refusing tythes and offerings, even though the office of the curate were well performed. It is true, that to withhold these contributions, in such a case, is frequently described as a neglect of duty; but Wycliffe does not hesitate to affirm the latter delinquency, serious as it may be, to be far less so than the former.

The last article of this complaint, we have

noticed as relating to the doctrine of the eucharist. CHAP. IV.  
 The reformer claims it as a right to publish freely the scripture representations of that sacrament, but he abstains from any statement of his peculiar views respecting it, which were indeed sufficiently known, and adverts chiefly to the evils arising from “the worldly business of priests.”

His manner of concluding the portion of this work which relates to tythes and offerings, is expressive of that sense of justice, humanity, and religion, which sustained the mind of the writer, while called to witness the growing strength of the enemies of reform. “Ah! Lord God,” he exclaims, “can it be reason, to constrain the poor  
 “people to provide a worldly priest, sometimes  
 “unable both of life and knowledge, in his pomp  
 “and pride, covetousness and envy, gluttony, drunkenness, and lechery, in simony and heresy,—  
 “with a fine horse, and gay saddles, and bridles  
 “ringing by the way, and himself in costly clothes,  
 “and fine furs—and to suffer their wives and  
 “children, and poor neighbours to perish from  
 “hunger, thirst, and cold, and other mischiefs  
 “of the world! Ah! Lord Jesus Christ! since  
 “within a few years, men paid their tythes and  
 “offerings of their own free will, to good men,  
 “and able to conduct the great worship of God,  
 “to the profit and beauty of the holy church  
 “fighting on the earth; can it be needful or lawful  
 “that a worldly priest should destroy this holy  
 “and approved custom, constraining men to  
 “forsake this freedom, and turning tythes and  
 “offerings to wicked uses, or at least to those



CHAP. "which are not so good as was the custom  
IV. "before?"

Effect of  
this appeal.

The impression made on the parliament by this appeal was considerable, and to Wycliffe must have been highly gratifying. In a petition to the king, the members of the commons cited those provisions of the spurious statute obtained by the primate, which, to effect the imprisonment of the new preachers, and their abettors, until obedient to the church, had rendered every sheriff in the kingdom the tool of his diocesan, requiring him to root out the errors by the sword entrusted to him, which neither the persuasions nor the terrors of an infallible church had been sufficient to destroy. But as this pretended law "was never agreed to "nor granted by the commons, but whatsoever "was moved therein was without their assent," it is required "that the said statute be disannulled," and it is farther declared to be "in no wise their meaning, that either themselves, or "such as shall succeed them, shall be farther "bound to the prelates, than were their ancestors "in former times."<sup>4</sup>

But to procure the enactment or the repeal of statutes, however formally either might be done, was but a minor part of the labour which devolved on our parliaments in those ages. Nothing, indeed, was more common, than the violation of promises, and even of oaths, on the part of the sovereign, or of the government; and to justify this bad faith, the secret, or avowed pretext generally was, that the concessions made had been improperly extorted. Hence to secure

<sup>4</sup> Fox. Acts and Monuments, i. 576. Lingard, iv. 259.

the enforcement of laws, was commonly a work of much greater difficulty, than to effect their apparent adoption. From this disgraceful circumstance, arose the custom of so frequently confirming anew the most acknowledged principles of the constitution. Nor is it at all doubtful, that to this state of things, as pervading the cabinets of Europe, the court of Rome had greatly contributed, as well by her general policy, as by the most flagrant abuses of her dispensing power. With the papal maxims, the present archbishop of Canterbury was thoroughly imbued, and to him we may attribute the exclusion of this act of repeal, so honourable to its authors, from the parliamentary records; and also the subsequent conduct of the young king, by which his message to the commons, in reply to their petition, was virtually falsified. CHAP.  
IV.  
—

In his letters, Richard had been made to threaten the penalties of exclusion from the university, imprisonment, and confiscation, against all who should hold the doctrine of Wycliffe, or such as should in any way favour its abettors. And though the monarch subsequently declared himself pleased with the repeal of the statute on which these instructions were founded, the violent measures which it had been framed to sanction were still pursued, and with but too much success. It was, as we have remarked, on the 19th of November, that the parliament and the convocation assembled at Oxford. The clergy there convened, were informed by the primate, that the business before them was to grant a subsidy to the crown; and to remedy certain disorders which

CHAP. had too long disgraced the university, and were  
 IV. extending rapidly to the whole community, of whose spiritual safety they were the properly constituted guardians. In this meeting the archbishop had concentrated his whole strength, and the rector of Lutterworth was now summoned to answer before him on the articles which were regarded as containing his opinions. There were circumstances, however, which served greatly to narrow the field of discussion on this occasion. On all the more important questions of ecclesiastical polity, Wycliffe had spoken freely, in his various writings, and in his address to "the secular lords and men of holy church" who were now met. But the resentment of the commons, which the meditated encroachment of the prelates had excited, was not to be overlooked, and it appears to have suggested the utmost caution in the method of proceeding at this juncture. It was not difficult to perceive, that matters of discipline, as less important, and less protected by the supposed infallibility of the church, might form but an inefficient ground of accusation; and as the doctrine of the eucharist was an acknowledged article of faith, and one also of the gravest moment, the faith of the reformer with respect to that sacrament became the subject of special inquisition. Lancaster, who appears to have been concerned, at this crisis, to avoid any renewal of hostilities with the clergy, is said to have advised his submission in all doctrinal matters to the judgment of his order.<sup>5</sup> But Wycliffe, though sen-

He is forsaken by Lancaster.

<sup>5</sup> In the Sudbury Register, (Wilkins, iii. 171.) the duke is highly commended for his conduct in this instance.

sible of the aid which he had derived from the patronage of that illustrious nobleman, had advanced to a point from which there was no receding, except at the cost of consistency and truth. The state of affairs, at this moment, presented a powerful test to the integrity and energy of his character; and the result has served to place him among the most distinguished of confessors. To have denied his doctrine on the eucharist, -- or simply to have abstained from teaching it, would have been to continue sheltered from the resentment of the clergy, by the power of one who was still the second man in the kingdom. To proceed in exposing the weakness and impiety of the received opinions on that sacrament, and this in opposition to the serious admonitions of John of Gaunt, was deliberately to encounter the unbridled malevolence of his enemies. The latter course, however, costly as it might prove, was the object of his choice. We also learn, and from a writer who was not a little solicitous to fasten the disgrace of equivocation upon the name of Wycliffe, that the command of the duke, in this particular, affected his purposes in no degree more than the injunctions of the primate. And it is added by the same authority, that in his public defence on the sacrament of the altar, "like an obstinate heretic, he refuted all "the doctors of the second millenary."<sup>6</sup>

CHAP.  
IV.

His purposes unaltered by that event.

To understand the zeal with which the reformer assailed the errors of transubstantiation, we must bear in mind the views which he had adopted concerning it. The adoration of a piece

<sup>6</sup> Walsingham, Hist. 283.

CHAP.  
VI.

of bread in the place of the Deity, was, in his judgment, idolatry. The conduct of the priest, also, in pretending to re-make his Maker, he vehemently pronounced to be the last step of presumption and blasphemy. Nor was this all; for in a treatise published soon after this period, and which, from its extent and its character, we may presume to have been already in a great degree composed, he attacks the orthodox mysteries connected with the eucharist, from a most luminous perception of their general bearing. So long as these are received in the church, their tendency, he affirms, must be to facilitate the introduction of any dogma serving to elevate the priesthood, however much opposed to scripture, to reason, or to the senses. The doctrine of a real presence, he declares to be the offspring of Satan; and the author of evil is viewed, while inventing it, as reasoning thus with himself. “Should I once  
“so far beguile the faithful of the church, by the  
“aid of Antichrist, my vicegerent, as to persuade  
“them to deny that this sacrament is bread, and  
“to induce them to regard it as merely an accident, there will be nothing then which I may  
“not bring them to receive, since there can be  
“nothing more opposite to the scriptures, or to  
“common discernment. Let the life of a prelate  
“then be what it may, let him be guilty of luxury,  
“simony, or murder, the people may be led to  
“believe that he is really no such man—nay, they  
“may then be persuaded to admit, that the pope  
“is infallible, at least with respect to the matters  
“of christian faith; and that, inasmuch as he is  
“known by the name of Most Holy Father, he is

His views of  
the bearing  
of this controversy.

“of course free from sin.”<sup>7</sup> Thus it appeared to Wycliffe, that while the authority of the church was so far submitted to, as to involve the adoption of this marvellous dogma, no limit could possibly be assigned to the schemes of clerical imposture and oppression. He sought its overthrow accordingly, as being false in itself; and still more as being the parent, directly or indirectly, of innumerable falsehoods. His attack, therefore, upon transubstantiation, was evidently conducted with a view to the general freedom of the human mind.

Nor was the reformer without that stimulus in the present unequal contest, which arises from the confidence of success. In an earlier chapter of the treatise last cited, he exclaims, “Oh! that all who believe could see how Antichrist and his instruments condemn the sons of the church, and persecute them even to death, because they maintain this truth as taught in the gospel. Truly aware I am, that the doctrine of the gospel may for a season be trampled under foot, that it may be overpowered in high places, and even suppressed by the threatenings of Antichrist; but equally sure I am, that it shall never be extinguished, for it is the recording of truth itself, ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away, but so shall not my words.’ Let the spirit of the faithful therefore awake itself, and diligently enquire as to the nature of this venerable sacrament, whether it be not indeed bread, as the gospel, the senses, and reason assure us. Certain, verily, I am, that the idolaters who make

CHAP.  
IV.  
—

His confidence of ultimate success.

<sup>7</sup> Trialogus, lib. iv. c. 7. The substance of this passage occurs in the

MS. Contra Fratres, Bibl. Bodl. Archi. A. 83.

CHAP. “ to themselves gods, are not ignorant of the real  
 IV. “ nature of these gods — though they pretend  
 “ there is a something of deity within them,  
 “ which is communicated, as by the God of gods.”  
 To believe this, he remarks, is to sink in the scale  
 of perception beneath the pagan or the brute ;  
 and from what he had written, the conclusion is  
 said to follow, “ that this venerable sacrament is  
 “ naturally bread, and sacramentally, the body  
 “ of Christ.”<sup>8</sup>

His appear-  
 ance before  
 the convoca-  
 tion at Ox-  
 ford.

But to return to the proceedings of the con-  
 vocation at Oxford. The assembly on which it  
 devolved to ascertain the opinions of Wycliffe,  
 and to determine their character, consisted of the  
 archbishop of Canterbury, the bishops of Lincoln,  
 Norwich, Worcester, London, Salisbury, and  
 Hereford, with a numerous selection of doctors,  
 together with the chancellor of the university,  
 and many of the inferior clergy. Around these  
 also, the laity were crowded as auditors, variously  
 interested in the object of the meeting. Before  
 this imposing array of authority and learning,  
 and all marshalled against him, stood the rector  
 of Lutterworth. More than forty years had now  
 elapsed, since Oxford had first become his resi-  
 dence, and a place associated in his mind with  
 many pleasing recollections or pursuits. Through  
 that long period it had been more or less his  
 home. Before him it stood, a venerable esta-  
 blishment, formed to nurse the intellect of his  
 country, in subservience to the great designs of  
 patriotism, philanthropy, and religion. Hence he  
 had always been among the foremost to defend

<sup>8</sup> Trialogus, lib. iv. c. 4.



its jurisdiction as independent of all foreign control, and especially of that which proceeded from the papacy. He was now grey with age, or rather, perhaps, as the effect of those religious solitudes, and that mental activity, which appear always to have surpassed the ability of his feebleness, and to have been constantly exposing him to the inroads of disease. The place, also, in which he now appeared, under so much serious accusation, and upon such unequal terms, had frequently echoed to the utterance of his praise by admiring converts, and, to the sound of his voice, as the advocate of doctrines endeared to the purer ages of the church. Nor is it to be supposed that his numerous followers had become suddenly extinct. But at this moment, the partizans of the established superstitions had so far diffused the terrors of their strength, that the reformer, like another Elijah, stands apparently alone amid a generation of his countrymen. Still, while certain affecting recollections were doubtless fresh within him, and while his present circumstances were quite alarming enough to have shaken even an extraordinary mind, such was his conviction of the goodness of his cause, that his firmness continues unbroken.

His defence, we have seen, was such as to extort from adversaries the praise of an unrivalled acuteness. And his written confessions, which the same adversaries have transmitted to us, contain the most distinct announcements of whatever he had previously taught on the sacrament to which they relate. That two confessions referring to this article should be

CHAP. attributed to him, will be in part explained by  
 IV. observing, that the one is in Latin, the other in English. In addition to which, the first treats the question in a style which the more learned of his judges must have seen to be adapted to their taste, simply for the purpose of defeating them with their own weapons ; while the English document touches but distantly on the distinctions of the schools, and is framed to meet the popular apprehension. It was not unusual to exact confessions from suspected persons in this double form ; and had those of Wycliffe contained any recantation, both would have been publicly read in the schools of the university, and from the pulpits of the clergy. In this manner the twenty-four articles had been published, which were condemned some months previously by the synod at the preaching friars.

Substance  
 of his con-  
 fession.

In his Latin confession,<sup>9</sup> Wycliffe applies himself to demonstrate, and in the dialect of the schools, “that this venerable sacrament is *naturally* bread and wine, but *sacramentally* the body “and blood of Christ.” With a view to this object, he observes, that there are six modes of existing that may be attributed to the body of the Saviour ; and that three of these may be affirmed of that body as it is present in the eucharist ; and three of its state as peculiar to the heavenly world. In the eucharist, he is virtually, spiritually, and sacramentally present, but his substantial, his corporeal, and his dimensional presence, is declared to pertain exclusively to his mode of being in the celestial state. The

<sup>9</sup> See it in the Appendix, No. VI.

reformer then repeats the doctrine maintained by himself and his followers; denies the charge of their adoring the elements of bread and wine; and observes that he had detected the fallacies of his opponents, who, in citing the language of the fathers on this sacrament, were always disposed to confound the notion of a sacramental, with that of an identical presence. The result of this mistake is affirmed to be, the insane fiction of an accident, or quality, without a subject,—a tenet declared to be equally insulting to the church, and injurious to God.

The English confession, if we discard its orthography, and something of its obsolete expression, will state his judgment on this important article more distinctly than any abridgment in other language. “We believe,” he writes, “as Christ and his apostles have taught us, that the sacrament of the altar, white and round, and like to our bread or host unconsecrated, is verily God’s body in the form of bread; and if it be broken into three parts, as is the custom of the church, or into a thousand, every one of these parts is in the same sense God’s body. And just as the person of Christ is very God, and very man, so the church through many hundred winters hath believed the same sacrament to be very God’s body, and very bread, since it is the form of God’s body, and the form of bread, as Christ and his apostles taught. Hence, St. Paul nameth it never without calling it bread, and he, according to our belief, obtained his knowledge in this matter from God. And the arguments of heretics against this

CHAP.  
IV.

CHAP. “ doctrine, a christian man may easily answer. For  
IV. — “ just as it is heresy to believe that Christ is a  
“ spirit and no body, so is it heresy to suppose  
“ that this sacrament is God’s body and no bread,  
“ for it is both together. But the greatest heresy  
“ which God has suffered to come to his church,  
“ is to suppose that this sacrament is an acci-  
“ dent, or a mere quality without a substance,  
“ and may in no sense be God’s body; for  
“ Christ himself, as witnessed by John, said,  
“ ‘This is my body.’ And if they say, that  
“ according to this showing holy church has  
“ been in heresy many hundred winters, in truth  
“ so it is; and especially since the fiend was  
“ loosed, who is witnessed of by the angel to St.  
“ John, as to be loosed in a thousand winters  
“ after Christ was ascended into heaven. But it  
“ is also to suppose, that many saints who died  
“ in the mean time, were purified from this error  
“ before their death. Mark how great a diver-  
“ sity there is, between us who suppose that this  
“ sacrament is very bread in its kind, and be-  
“ tween heretics who tell us that it is an accident  
“ without a subject. For before the fiend, the  
“ father of falsehood, was loosed, this deceitful  
“ prating was never invented. And how great  
“ diversity also there is between us who suppose  
“ that this sacrament, which in its kind is very  
“ bread, and sacramentally God’s body, and  
“ heretics, who think and teach that this sacra-  
“ ment may in no wise be God’s body. For I  
“ dare assuredly to say, if this were true, Christ  
“ and his saints died heretics, and that the  
“ greater part of the holy church now believeth

“ heresy. Therefore devout men suppose, that CHAP.  
IV.  
 “ the council of friars in London, was the  
 “ cause of the earthquake. For they put a  
 “ heresy on Christ and on the saints in heaven :  
 “ wherefore the earth trembled : the faithful land  
 “ answered the voice of man for God, as it did  
 “ in the time of his passion, when he was sen-  
 “ tenced to bodily death. May Christ, and his  
 “ mother, who in the beginning destroyed all  
 “ heresies, keep his church in a right belief of  
 “ this sacrament ; and move the king and his  
 “ kingdom to ask sharply of his clerks this ser-  
 “ vice — that all his possessioners, on pain of  
 “ losing all their temporalities, tell the king and  
 “ his kingdom, and with sufficient evidence, what  
 “ this sacrament is—and that all the orders of  
 “ friars, on pain of losing their allegiance, tell  
 “ the king and his kingdom, and with good rea-  
 “ son also, what is the nature of this sacrament.  
 “ For I am certain that a third part of the clergy,  
 “ who defend this doutes that is here said, that  
 “ they will defend it on pain of their life.”<sup>10</sup>

It will be remembered by the reader, that to affirm the existence of bread in the eucharist, after the words of consecration were pronounced, was to deny the doctrine of transubstantiation. In these papers this assertion is not only made, but repeated, and that with a plainness which is obvious on the slightest attention. In addition to

<sup>10</sup> Appendix, No. VII. Wycliffe is commonly understood as stating in the last sentence, that his doctrine on the eucharist was really that of a third among the clergy. The passage is obscure. To me its meaning rather

appears to be, that, in the conviction of the reformer, a third part of the men who had embraced his doctrine on this point, would die rather than relinquish it.

CHAP. which, the reformer has gratuitously annexed to  
IV.  
— these explicit statements of his own doctrine, an attack on that of his opponents—and one quite as uncompromising as may be selected from any portion of his writings. We have before remarked, that the properties of whiteness and roundness, pertaining to the sacramental bread before the act of consecration was performed, were acknowledged to exist afterwards; but that it was, nevertheless, contended, that the bread itself had ceased to be. Wycliffe knew well that this assertion, offering as it did the most hardy insult both to the reason and the senses, was the formal doctrine of the men who were now before him as his judges. This doctrine, however, he affirms to be erroneous, heretical, a mockery of human perception, the imputing of blasphemy to Christ and to his saints, and of all the anti-christian delusions which had been poured upon the church, since the fatal hour of Satan's enlargement, this is declared to be the most repugnant to the religion of the Bible!

Walsingham felt himself obliged to concede, that Wycliffe's confession was a re-assertion instead of a renunciation of his doctrine. But the sagacious Henry Knighton, while inserting the above paper in his annals, describes the reformer as renouncing his creed to avoid the pains of death. Under shelter too, of this feeble authority, the calumny has been often repeated; and it still continues to be the ground of insinuations intended to fix upon Wycliffe the reproach of timidity and concealment. This may have arisen in some instances, from weakness and misappre-

hension, as would seem to have been the case with Knighton; in others, from indolence; but in many it is difficult to view it in any other light than as an effect of that imperfect reverence for truth, which is too commonly the result of party zeal. The denial, indeed, of transubstantiation, in the above documents, is too evident to require farther notice;<sup>11</sup> and if there are expressions in both which betray some hesitation of thought, as to the precise manner in which the body and blood of Christ are really present with their visible emblems in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, it is certain that these expressions were by no means peculiar to the present crisis.<sup>12</sup> On the contrary, they had long been, and they continue ever after to be, of such constant occurrence in his numerous writings, whenever this topic is referred to, that a volume might be filled with extracts, exhibiting every shade of sentiment and language observable in these more formal statements of his creed.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> It will be remembered, that the chancellor, William de Berton, and his coadjutors, when condemning the doctrine of Wycliffe with such severe penalties, affirmed, in opposition to the reformer, that in this venerable sacrament, "the very body of Christ and his blood are really contained, not only *figuratively* or *tropically*, but *essentially*, *substantially*, and *corporally*; so that Christ is there verily in his own proper bodily presence." The reader will perceive that the doctrine thus condemned is precisely that which Wycliffe re-asserts, and in the very terms of its former announcement. See Ch. iii. and Appendix, Nos. II. III.

<sup>12</sup> I have been at some pains to ascertain this fact, as it appeared to me strictly necessary to a correct judgment of the reformer's conduct in

this instance. It was not to be known from any thing already before the public, whether this sameness of sentiment and expression existed or not. For any thing that appeared, Wycliffe might have published a doctrine on this subject from his pulpit at Lutterworth widely different from that now delivered to the convocation. I have read every page delivered from that pulpit which has descended to us, and the reformer's writings generally, with a careful reference to this point. The result has been to ascertain, that if Wycliffe was more of a Protestant, he was also more of a schoolman, than has been commonly supposed. Note to the second edition.

<sup>13</sup> Thus his work, intitled, "Against the Blasphemies of the Friars," a manuscript extending to about forty



CHAP.  
IV.

Perplexity  
of his  
judges.

But far as Wycliffe's confessions must have been from affording satisfaction to his judges, it is easy to conceive that no little difficulty would be felt in adjusting the measures to be adopted concerning him. It was known that he had acquired no mean place in the affections of the people, and that many of the learned and of the powerful had shown themselves disposed to venerate his character. But from this period, and by virtue of letters obtained from the king, his connexion with Oxford was dissolved.<sup>14</sup> This,

quarto pages, and written after this time, contains every thing to be found in his confessions; the same firmness in denying the doctrine of transubstantiation, and the same partial obscurity as to the real mode of the Saviour's presence in the eucharist.—Bibl. Bodl. Archi. A. 83. The first of the heresies maintained by the friars is said to be "of the sacrament." "And as to the first we say, surely, of our faith, that the white thing and round that the priest consecrates like to the unconsecrated host, and which is broken and eaten, is verily God's body in the form of bread." This he states as his doctrine, and proceeds to expose the absurdity of denying the existence of bread in the sacrament, after the words of consecration were uttered, adding, "we should scorn those heretics who leave the words of Christ, and feign words or sentence without authority"—"since bodily eating was bidden of Christ, and this bodily eating might not be unless there were bread, then this bread lasts after the sacreeding." This is said to follow so plainly from the words of Christ, that should "a hundred cardinals" assert the contrary, they are not to be credited. His opponents also are compared to "crabs who start aback,"

as soon as pressed to give any rational account of their doctrine.

Thus also he is continually expressing himself in his homilies. In that on Ephes. iv. he thus writes:—"Christ saith, and saints after, that the host which is sacred is verily Christ's own body in form of bread, as christian men believe, and neither an accident without a subject, nor nought, as heretics say. An error in understanding holy writ hath brought in this heresy." Again, on 1 Thessalonians, iv. "Would God that men took heed to the speech of Paul in this place, both to hold virtues and to flee heresies, for both are needful to men. Then men should hear God's word gladly, and despise fables, and err not in the sacred host, but grant that it is both things, both bread and God's body." Thus also in the discourse on the tenth chapter in the 1st Corinthians, noticing the evangelical meaning given by the apostle to the rock of the wilderness, as a figure of Christ, he exclaims, "And would God that heretics, in the matter of the sacred host, understood these subtle words to the intent of the Holy Ghost, then should they not fear to grant that this bread is God's body."

<sup>14</sup> Fox, Acts, &c.

however, was not until the seeds of his doctrine had been sown there with such profusion as to defy every subsequent effort to remove them. The reformer now retired to Lutterworth, and to effect a wider diffusion of his principles, by means of his writings, he there laboured with an industry which seems to have increased with his years and infirmities.<sup>15</sup>

It is about this period that Wycliffe was summoned by Urban to appear at Rome, and to answer before the chair of St. Peter, on the matters imputed to him.<sup>16</sup> His sufferings from paralysis, rendered his taking such a journey impracticable; and had it been otherwise, it would have been no part of wisdom to have exposed himself to a conflict even less equal than that which he had been called to encounter nearer home. When the venerable Grossteste ventured to publish his opposition to a particular branch of papal corruption, he chose an indirect method of conveying his reproof.<sup>17</sup> “If we except the “sins of Lucifer and Antichrist,” he observes, “there is not, nor can there be, a greater crime, “nor any thing more opposed to the doctrine “of the gospel, or more odious and abominable “in the sight of Jesus Christ, than to desolate “and destroy the souls of men by depriving them

CHAP.  
IV.  
He is cited to appear before the pontiff.

<sup>15</sup> Wood (189) has taken up the calumny of Wycliffe's having descended to recant his opinions,—a statement which, as Dr. Wordsworth observes, does not accord with what the same writer “tells us in the same “page, that this confession was “countered by no less than six several “antagonists immediately after its “publication,” p. 49. The following

are the names of the assailants: William de Berton, who had previously condemned the doctrine of Wycliffe, and now extends his anathema on this document; John Tyssington; Thomas Winterton; John Welleys; Ughtred Bolton; Simon Southry; all, with the exception of Berton, being either monks or friars.

<sup>16</sup> See Appendix, No. VIII.

<sup>17</sup> Paris, 870.

CHAP. " of the ministry, and the spiritual aid of their  
 IV. " pastors. It is impossible, therefore, that the  
 " holy apostolic see, which has received its power  
 " from the Lord Jesus Christ for edification and  
 " not for destruction, can be guilty of such a  
 " crime, or any thing approaching to it, so hateful  
 " to God, so injurious to man. This would be a  
 " most manifest corruption of its authority, the  
 " forfeiture of all its glory, and the means of  
 " plunging it into the pains of hell." The bishop  
 of Lincoln, however, well knew that the sins  
 which he so forcibly condemns, were the daily  
 practice of the pontiffs. Wycliffe, who was not  
 unacquainted with the memorable remonstrance  
 of this prelate, appears to have made it the model  
 of his own address to the same power, but glances  
 more widely at the features of its degeneracy,  
 speaks with more plainness of the necessity of  
 reformation, and also as to the principles which  
 should lead to it. He begins his letter by ob-  
 serving, " I have joyfully to tell the belief which  
 " I hold, and always to the pope. For I suppose,  
 " that if my faith be right and given of God, the  
 " pope will gladly preserve it, and that if my  
 " faith be error, the pope will wisely amend it."  
 From this introduction he proceeds to declare  
 his faith in the supreme authority of the scrip-  
 tures, and his determination to follow the pontiff  
 himself, only as he shall be found to follow the  
 Author of the gospel. Describing " the gospel  
 " of Christ" as a " part of the body of God's  
 " law," he thus proceeds. " For I believe that  
 " Jesus Christ, who gave in his own person this  
 " gospel, is very God, and very man, and that

His reply.

“ for this reason it passes all other laws. I sup- CHAP.  
“ pose over this that the pope is most obliged to IV.  
“ the keeping of the gospel, among all men who  
“ here live, for the pope is the highest vicar that  
“ Christ has here on earth. But the greatness  
“ of Christ’s vicars is not measured by worldly  
“ greatness, but by this, that this same vicar  
“ follows Christ most in virtuous living, for thus  
“ teaches the gospel. That this is the judgment  
“ of Christ and his apostles, I take as a part of  
“ faith, since Christ, during the time that he  
“ walked here, was the most poor of all men  
“ both in spirit and in possession, for Christ says,  
“ that he had no where for to rest his head.  
“ And beside this, I take as a part of faith, that  
“ no man should follow the pope, no, nor any  
“ saint that is now in heaven, but inasmuch as  
“ he followed Christ ; for James and John erred,  
“ and Peter and Paul sinned.” If this language  
could not fail to offend, the following statement  
would be equally unwelcome. “ This,” he ob-  
serves, “ I take as wholesome counsel, that the  
“ pope should leave his worldly lordship to  
“ worldly lords, as Christ enjoins him ; and that  
“ he should speedily move all his clerks to do so,  
“ for thus did Christ, and taught his disciples  
“ thus, until the fiend had blinded this world.”  
He concludes with his usual expression of wil-  
lingness to retract his opinions, should they be  
proved erroneous ; and by stating, that as the  
providence of the Redeemer was plainly opposed  
to his visiting Rome, he trusts the pontiff will not  
shew himself to be indeed Antichrist, by insisting  
on a compliance with his pleasure on that point.

## CHAPTER V.

STATE OF THE REFORMED DOCTRINE ON THE CONTINENT DURING THE AGE OF WYCLIFFE.—CAUSES OF THE PROTECTION FREQUENTLY AFFORDED TO ITS DISCIPLES BY THE SECULAR POWER.—PROBABLE MOTIVES OF THE DUKE OF LANCASTER IN PATRONIZING WYCLIFFE.—THE REFORMER IS FAVOURED BY THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER—THE QUEEN MOTHER—ANNE OF BOHEMIA.—FARTHER NOTICE OF WYCLIFFE'S MORE DISTINGUISHED FOLLOWERS.—GEOFFREY CHAUCER.—INFLUENCE OF POETRY ON THE REFORMATION OF THE CHURCH.—NOTICE OF ST. AMOUR—OF THE ROMAN DE LA ROSE—AND OF ROBERT LONGLAND.

### CHAP. V.

State of the reformed doctrine on the continent during the age of Wycliffe.

WHILE the English reformer was thus employed in diffusing the principles of spiritual freedom through this once vassal kingdom, the descendants of the Vaudois and Albigenses had visibly increased in many parts of the continent. The secrecy to which their opinions and practices had been consigned, as affording their only hope of security from the return of persecution, was less cautiously observed; and their names occur, in consequence, with greater frequency in the bulls of the pontiffs, and in the decrees of clerical assemblies. We find them variously scattered through Germany, France, and Italy itself; and traces of them are observable in Poland, in Spain, in Bohemia, and along the farthest shores of the Adriatic. But in every locality the same vicissitudes attended them. In many instances, the profits which arose from the confiscation of their property, appears to have supplied the principal motive to persecution; in some it resulted from

that mixture of irritation and contempt that is not unfrequently produced by objects which, if too insignificant to create alarm, are sufficiently important to prove an annoyance. Despised, however, as the feeble remnant of the Waldenses generally was, at this period, they were to do much among the nations of the continent toward preserving the seeds of that momentous revolution, which stands so prominently connected with the names of Wycliffe, Huss, and Luther.

In districts where the continuance of these people was such as to render them known, the nobility, and the proprietors of the soil, generally proved their protectors and friends. This may have arisen, in some cases, from those motives of interest, which the industry and frugality of the sectaries contributed so largely to affect; and in others, from an admiration of those unquestionable virtues, which were found to distinguish these suspected communities. From considerations of this nature, nobles, who were not themselves prepared to abandon the communion of Rome, were often constrained to shelter a people who were known to be opposed to its pretensions. It is probable, also, that they frequently saw much to deplore in the ambition or the worldliness of the existing priesthood, and in the superstitions which were generally imposed on the people; and that perceiving the virtues which the papal sacraments were not always known to confer, could exist in contempt of them, they began in some instances to possess a real sympathy with these humble devotees, in their sighs to escape from the yoke of the pontiffs. But the machinery of despotism had

CHAP.  
V.  
—  
Motives of the powerful in favouring dissenters from the hierarchy.

CHAP.  
V.

been too completely adjusted, with a view to crush every victim that would be free, and too long sanctified by the practice and the laws of nations, to admit of being materially injured by local and isolated efforts. The reformation to be attempted by such influence, could refer only to the details, or to the more glaring abuses of the system, leaving all its great principles, and the sources of its strength, undisturbed.<sup>1</sup>

Probable  
motives of  
John of  
Gaunt in  
patronizing  
Wycliffe.

The whole of these motives, though in themselves of various excellence, imply much that is honourable with respect to the character of the parties who were so often indebted to them for protection. Considerations of the mixed character described, appear to have influenced the duke of Lancaster in his patronage of Wycliffe. The encroachments of the papacy, not only in reference to the honours and the property of the English church, but, through that medium, on the authority of the crown, had evidently displeased him. He was thus prepared to encourage the labours of a man who proposed to shew, that such things were as unlike pure christianity, as they were unfriendly to the interests of the nation. So long, therefore, as the zeal of the rector of Lutterworth was limited to the discipline emanating from the court of Rome, or to the more obnoxious of the superstitions which its authority had sanctioned, the shield of Lancaster was over him. But some time before the meeting at Oxford in 1382, Wycliffe had extended his attacks from the politics to the doctrine of the hierarchy,

<sup>1</sup> The reader disposed to attend further to this subject is referred to Note C.



and that in many particulars besides the point of the real presence. This distinction between the spiritual dogmas of the church, and her external polity, had long been familiar to the laity of Europe ; and the reformer's innovations upon the one, would not fail to alarm many of his contemporaries, who had been most sincere in his cause while concerning himself only with the other. Thus it was in general upon the continent, and thus it long continued to be in England. To a solicitude for the independence of his country, the duke certainly added a respect for literature, and for good men ; and from these causes alone, he might honestly favour the efforts which were designed to secure some narrower limits to the empire of the popes. His second marriage, however, contracted simply because it promised to open his way to the throne which had been so much disgraced by Peter the cruel ; and the nature of his subsequent connexion with Catharine Swinford, are particulars in his history which cannot be rendered pleasing. From these, and some other less prominent facts in the story of his life, it is but too certain, that however much the political creed of Wycliffe might commend itself to the mind of John of Gaunt, it was not the happiness of that distinguished nobleman to follow the lessons of the reformer with respect to moral obligation and the nature of piety. Wycliffe might oppose the secular ambition of the clergy with all the decision of Arnold of Brescia ; or assail the idolatrous customs of the church with the severity of Vigilantius ; but to inculcate the claims of the christian doctrine with the purity

CHAP. and earnestness of a primitive believer, was to  
V.  
— proceed where a few only would follow.

It is at the same time greatly to the honour of the duke, that, disapproving as he did of the doctrine of Wycliffe in relation to the eucharist, and unprepared as he was to follow out the plans of improvement proposed in the writings of that reformer, he continued to be known as an admirer of his character, and as the friend of his followers. He had listened to the herald of the approaching change in the faith and customs of Europe with delightful interest; and if there were things which he was not disposed to relinquish, though denounced as unlawful, it was not his manner to forget the excellencies which he knew to be connected with what he discountenanced as error. More than once, subsequently to the year 1382, his authority was successfully employed in behalf of the persecuted; to his death, no man's life was the forfeiture incurred by his creed. Among his latest acts, was a defence in parliament of the translation of the scriptures into English. These he declared to be the property of the people, and a property which no priesthood should be allowed to wrest from them.

It should also be remarked, that, had the reformed opinions been more fully adopted by Lancaster; it is difficult to perceive how his authority could have been rendered equal to the task, of completely protecting the men who had embraced them. Richard, by his extravagance and his favouritism, and by his participation in the disputes which had been so unhappily prevalent from the commencement of his reign, had rendered himself

almost dependent on the clergy. By the queen-  
 mother, he may have been taught to think favour-  
 ably of the character of Wycliffe; but alone, he  
 could never have withstood the enmity of the  
 church, which would have been the certain conse-  
 quence of his befriending the reformers. His  
 uncle, of Lancaster, was the only statesman who  
 could have afforded him any material aid in pur-  
 suing such a line of policy; and the malevolent  
 rumours circulated with respect to him, had so  
 far injured him both with the court and the  
 people, as to render it improbable that even his  
 influence would have been equal to such a crisis.<sup>2</sup>  
 The king possessed neither the consistency, nor  
 the energy, which, at such a moment, could alone  
 inspire confidence; while a boisterous temper,  
 which seemed to forebode the coming disasters of  
 the whole state, was constantly disclosing itself,  
 both among the governing and the governed. But  
 over all these circumstances, there was one Mind  
 presiding, to whose infinite discernment it ap-  
 peared well, that there should be in the regene-  
 ration of Christendom, as in the system of nature,  
 a seed time, and a wintry interval, before the ap-  
 pearance of spring, and the abundance of harvest.

Nor was the duke of Lancaster the only dis-  
 tinguished person in the fourteenth century, who  
 was known to be favourable to a reformation of  
 the Anglican church. His brother of Gloucester  
 may be presumed, from the work which Wycliffe  
 dedicated to him, to have been friendly to the zeal

CHAP.  
V.

<sup>2</sup> Knighton, 2657. Lewis, c. v. All that may be said in favour of John of Gaunt has been elaborately adduced by

his great admirer, Mr. Godwin. See the Life of Chaucer, ii. 219, 383—386, and elsewhere.

His efforts  
encouraged  
by other  
distinguish-  
ed persons.

CHAP.  
V.

of the reformer, as directed against the evils introduced into the ecclesiastical system by the mendicants.<sup>3</sup> In the number of his friends, we also find the widow of the Black Prince, the mother of the youthful Richard,—a female, whose character, equally amiable and commanding, seemed to authorize that interference with the disputes of the period which is not unfrequent in her history. It is conjectured, that her husband, toward the close of life, had regarded Lancaster with an eye of suspicion.<sup>4</sup> If so, the protection which the reformer obtained from that quarter, while known to be under the peculiar patronage of John of Gaunt, is the more honourable to the mother of the sovereign, and to the object of her favour. The motives which led her to prevent any definite sentence from being passed on the opinions of Wycliffe, by the synod at Lambeth, would perhaps induce an effort to create an esteem of the character and doctrine of the reformer in the mind of her son. But the feeble monarch began his career in too much dependence on the clergy; lending his name, and that in contempt of the constitution, to aid their measures of intolerance.

Anne of  
Bohemia,

His queen came to this country in 1382. She was daughter to the emperor Charles the fourth, and sister to the king of Bohemia. By Wycliffe she is described as the sister of Cæsar, and as

<sup>3</sup> MS. of Trinity College, Dublin, class C. tab. 3. No. 12. This work treats considerably of theological opinions. The writer states, among other things, that "God is so good that in each goodness he is before, and in each evil he cometh after the effect." It should be added that the discussion

is said to have taken place in the presence of the duke; and that Knighton speaks of more than one person bearing that title, as among the friends of Wycliffe, "*cum ducibus et comitibus.*" De Event. 2661.

<sup>4</sup> Vol. i. 346, 377.

possessing the gospel written in three languages, CHAP.  
Bohemian, German, and Latin; and the reformer V.  
inquires whether to “hereticate her on that  
“account, would not be luciferian folly.”<sup>5</sup> Her  
removal from this world, in which little repose  
was allotted to her, took place in 1394, and Arun-  
del, the primate, noticing her loss, observes, that  
“although she was a stranger, yet she constantly  
“studied the four gospels in English, and ex-  
“plained by the exposition of the doctors; and  
“in the study of these, and reading of godly  
“books, she was more diligent than even the pre-  
“lates themselves, though their office and busi-  
“ness require this of them.”<sup>6</sup> The queen’s  
connexion with Germany, and especially with  
Bohemia, may, in some measure, explain this  
attachment to the scriptures in the vernacular  
tongue, and the favour with which she is said to  
have regarded the reformers. In Germany, the  
power of the pontiffs had always to contend with  
the rival power of the emperors; and, in addition  
to this, with the less partial hostilities of sectaries,  
whom no persecution could destroy.<sup>7</sup>

While the nearest connexions of the sovereign  
were so far interested in the character and the  
labours of Wycliffe, it will be supposed that the  
reformer did not fail to obtain partisans among  
other privileged classes of his countrymen. It  
was indeed a matter of thankfulness with him,  
that “many knights favoured the gospel, and  
“had a mind to read it in English;”<sup>8</sup> and it is

<sup>5</sup> Lewis.

<sup>6</sup> Fox. Acts, &c.

<sup>7</sup> The sketch of the religious his-  
tory of Bohemia, which had its place

in the text of the former edition, will  
be found at the end of this volume,  
in Note D.

<sup>8</sup> MS. Hom. on Matt. xi. Bib. Reg.

CHAP. the sincere lamentation of the orthodox Henry  
V.  
Knighton, that these "having a zeal for God,  
"but not according to knowledge, often sur-  
"rounded the false preachers with military bands,  
"that they might not suffer any reproaches or  
"losses on account of their profane doctrine."  
That such men, and their attendants, should  
appear in arms, was the custom of the age; and  
hardly worthy of that distinction would they  
have been, had they hesitated to employ their  
authority with a view to protect the men from  
reproach and losses, whom they professed to  
consider as worthy of far other treatment. To  
act upon the defensive merely, was to deserve  
the praise of moderation. We have seen that so  
early as the year 1377, Lord Percy, the earl  
marshal, avowed himself the friend of Wycliffe,  
and appeared in that character with John of Gaunt  
before the synod at St. Paul's. But the names  
which occur most frequently, as those of per-  
sons in the higher classes who favoured the doc-  
trine of the reformer, are Sir John Pecche, Sir  
Reginald Hilton, Sir John Trussel, Sir William  
Neville, Sir John Clenboun, Sir John Montague,  
Sir Lewis Clifford, Sir Thomas Latimer, and Sir  
Richard Sturry.

The father of Sir John Pecche was a knight of  
Wormleighton, in Warwickshire. He had been  
warden of the Cinque Ports, and governor of  
Corfe Castle, and died in the last year of Edward  
the third. His son survived the reformer but  
two years. Sir Reginald Hilton is described as  
of Hilton, in the county palatine of Durham,  
and Sir John Trussel, as of Cubleston in Stafford-

shire. Sir William Neville was the third son of <sup>CHAP.</sup> Ralph, lord Neville; Sir John Montague or Mon- <sup>V.</sup> — — tacute, was brother to William de Montacute, earl of Salisbury; the family of Sir John Clenboun is unknown. By certain of these noblemen, the images found in the churches subject to their patronage, are said to have been demolished;—a fact which suggests, that their attachment to Wycliffe arose from an approbation of his theological, as well as of his political creed. Sir Lewis Clifford was the younger son of Sir Roger Clifford, of Hert and Hertness, in the county of Durham. In 1385, he received the order of the garter, and he will be remembered as the messenger of the queen-mother to the synod at Lambeth, requiring a suspension of the process commenced against Wycliffe. Sir Thomas Latimer was the son of John le Latimer, of Brabroke, in Northamptonshire. Sir Richard Sturry was the advocate of the Lollards in their memorable appeal to the government in 1395; when his temerity is said to have been severely reprimanded by Richard.<sup>9</sup>

Through a series of ages, the drawing up of testamentary documents was left to the taste, or

<sup>9</sup> It is of the persons noticed above that Knighton thus writes: "*Isti erant hujus secte promotores strenuissimi, et propugnatores fortissimi: qui militari cingulo ambebant, ne a recte credentibus aliquid approbrii aut dampni propter eorum prophanam doctrinam sortirentur.*" De Event. Anglæ. 2661. Dugdale has collected the information respecting these friends of reform which is given in the text. Baronage, i. ii. ubi supra. Of Sir John Montacute, the antiquarian writes

that he "was one of the chief of the sect of the Lollards, and the greatest fanatic of them all; being so transported with zeal, that he caused all the images that were in the chapel at Schenele (Shenly in Buckinghamshire), that had been there set up by the ancestors of his wife, to be taken down and thrown into obscure places, only the image of St. Catherine, in regard that many did affect it, he gave leave that it should stand in his bakehouse." Baronage, i. 650.



CHAP  
V.  

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rather to the policy of the clergy, and in such records the leading articles of the established creed generally made their appearance. Hence it happened, that any omission in such documents of appeals to the clemency of the Virgin, or of provision for masses after death, came to be regarded as indicating a repugnance to such tenets on the part of the deceased. Nor is it merely a negative evidence of this kind, which is sometimes supplied by such memorials. The influence of Wycliffe's teaching was frequently such as to induce his followers to discard the usual pomp of funerals, and to bestow their alms on the necessitous, instead of adding to the opulence of the priesthood. Thus the will of Sir John Montague, dated 1388, requires "that a black cloth of wool" (instead of a pall of silk or velvet,) should be laid over his body, and about, as also within his hearse; and to cover the ground should be cloth of russet and white, to be distributed to poor people after the burial, namely, as much as might make every poor man a coat and a hood." Thus also, Sir Thomas Latimer, wholly omitting the usual donation for masses, and month-minds, enjoins "that there be no manner of cost done about his burying, neither in meat, neither in drink, nor in any other thing, unless it be to any such one as needeth it after the law of God." Similar instructions are found in the will of Lewis Clifford, who, in common with the knight last mentioned, commends his spirit simply to the grace and the great mercy of the Trinity; though aware that the orthodox mode of disposing of the soul, was to commit it to the

care of the Virgin, and of all saints. Some humble confessions of sinfulness made by these persons, have been interpreted as proofs of their penitence, on account of the sanction which they had given to the heresies of Wycliffe. But such was the doctrine of that reformer respecting the extent of human depravity, that no one sincerely embracing it, would be found slow to confess himself "a false knight to God, and unworthy to be called a christian man."<sup>10</sup>

Of the degree in which the opinions of Wycliffe were adopted by these distinguished persons, we cannot speak with precision; but it is certain that their known favourable feeling was of no trivial service to his cause. The wealth of such men, also, was strictly necessary, in the absence of printing, to effect any considerable multiplication of his writings; and their power, which could alone awe the curious zeal of inquisitors, was no less important as the means of preserving such prohibited treasures when obtained. Could it be shewn, therefore, that the knights of the fourteenth century were few of them prepared to brave any serious losses, in defence of what may be called protestant doctrine, it is certain that many of them were so far attached to good men, and to the principles of religious freedom, as to prove the means of saving many of the works of the father of the reformation from oblivion. And it is only from the writings of Wycliffe that we can hope to place his conduct and opinions in their proper light. The volume in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge,

<sup>10</sup> Dugdale's Baronage.

CHAP. containing as it does the most popular of the  
V.  
— reformer's pieces, and extending to more than three hundred pages, with double columns, closely written, is the work of one transcriber. The same is true of another volume, including nearly the same series of treatises, in the library of Trinity College, Dublin. Such labour could not have been procured without cost; nor is it easy to conceive how works so formidable, and forbidden under such penalties, should have been preserved through so long an interval, except we view them as being for some generations the property of the powerful. Had they become the possession of churchmen, they would have been committed to the flames, or have been deposited among the secreted articles which have sometimes found their place in ecclesiastical libraries. But the reader will perceive from the catalogue of the reformer's manuscripts, appended to this volume, that it is not from such sources that any material information is to be derived, respecting the history or the opinions of Wycliffe. His works are ours, mainly, as the fruit of that mental independence, which began to distinguish the lay nobility, and the leaders of the commons in this country, before the disastrous accession of Henry the fourth.

Nor is it to be supposed, that the penalties were always inconsiderable, which were incurred by public men when they became known to the clergy as the friends of Wycliffe, or, indeed, as refusing to show themselves his enemies. The reverse is evident in the case of the duke of Lancaster, and of several others. But numbered with these early

advocates of the reformed doctrines, and at the same time distinguished from them all by his heroic sufferings, is Sir John Oldcastle, a knight, who from the inheritance of his wife, obtained the name of lord Cobham, and who after earning the confidence of Henry the fourth, and of his successor, was doomed to perish at the stake as a peace-offering, supplied by the sovereign to appease the wrath of an intolerant priesthood. This illustrious martyr was contemporary with Wycliffe; but as the story of his wrongs relates to a period considerably subsequent to the decease of our reformer, it will more properly claim our attention in the last chapter of this volume.

It was not without many appearances of propriety, that the early admirers of Wycliffe's character were accustomed to reckon the name of Geoffrey Chaucer, the father of English poetry, with those of his disciples. The poet was a native of London, and about four years younger than the reformer. Among his earliest efforts had been a translation of the *Roman de la Rose*,—a poem which satyriized the vices of the mendicants, with a freedom which must have been highly acceptable to Wycliffe; and both these distinguished men found their leading patron in John of Gaunt. It was to be presumed that Chaucer had embraced the doctrines which called for the reformation of the church, to the degree in which they were adopted by Lancaster; and if some pieces fraught with protestant sentiments have been improperly attributed to him, there are others of unquestionable authenticity which place this fact

CHAP.  
V.  
Geoffrey  
Chaucer.

CHAP. beyond suspicion.<sup>11</sup> There is one circumstance,  
V. however, which is alone sufficient to prevent our  
 regarding the author of the Canterbury Tales, as being, in all respects, a disciple of Wycliffe, and one, the bearing of which, in this view, has not been adequately noticed. The reformer was scarcely more distinguished from the age in which he lived, by the truth and sublimity of his religious doctrine, than by the purity of his maxims and of his feelings with regard to morals. Chaucer, too, has shown that he could sometimes appreciate a delicacy of this kind. But in other instances he could dwell on licentious themes, could descend to play with them, and to extract amusement from them, in a manner which, in the judgment of Wycliffe, must have been seriously reprehensible.<sup>12</sup> With him, to touch such matters, except for the purpose of loud and immediate rebuke, was not only to be exposed to infection, but to betray the interests of religion and of society. It should be remembered, also, that the poet speaks with reverence, even in his latest compositions, of transubstantiation, and of confession to a priest.<sup>13</sup> Few, however, are the evils, either in the church or in the state of society, to which the censure of Wycliffe was applied, which may not be found as the subject of satire or complaint in the poems of Chaucer. And if the same things are treated with more severity by the reformer than by the poet, it is as the obvious consequence of a more adequate

<sup>11</sup> Godwin's *Life of Chaucer*, ubi supra.

<sup>12</sup> Dryden, with all his admiration of Chaucer's genius, knew not how to

apologize for this feature of his writings. See Preface to his *Fables*.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

perception with respect to the evil involved in that apostacy which had come upon the church, and which shed its baneful influence through every part of society. As a faithful delineation of the manners of our ancestors, in the fourteenth century, the works of Chaucer must ever be valuable; and notwithstanding his too frequent innovations on its purity, his labours certainly contributed much to give form and efficiency to the language of his country.

But the celebrity of our father-poet is not to be considered as arising, in any great degree, from such extrinsic causes. Chaucer has been frequently associated with Dante and Petrarch, though to modern readers, even among ourselves, his name is much more familiar than his writings. Reviewing his productions of a graver cast, it must be confessed, that, had his attention been limited to such themes, his fame would have been very much less than at present. His Parson's Tale has been sometimes noticed as probably suggested by the known excellencies of the rector of Lutterworth. But if it were so, there can hardly be a more striking proof of the writer's incapacity to describe, or even to understand, the more commanding elements of human character. The speaker is evidently one of those men, whose amiable qualities can hardly fail to be revered in a parish; but who has none of the power necessary to produce the smallest indulation on the surface of society beyond that little boundary. In Wycliffe, that religious condescension which must win the affections of a village, was united with proofs of capacity which inspired the

CHAP. confidence of senates, and with an energy in  
 V. — action which menaced the very throne of the  
 papacy, and provoked its whole strength to the  
 conflict. Sublimity, either in thought or expres-  
 sion, was not the excellence of Chaucer. This  
 must much rather be sought in his humorous  
 notices of the manners of the age. The tran-  
 sition is, as from slumber to wakefulness, the  
 moment his narrative becomes embued with  
 mirth or satire; and it may be regretted, that his  
 vivacity and playfulness are commonly increased  
 by coming in contact with impurity. The Knight's  
 Tale, though a borrowed story, is so treated as  
 to demonstrate the vigour of his fancy. His  
 Troilus and Cresida would have been more beau-  
 tiful and more popular, had its author known how  
 to compress his pleasing theme; but the whole  
 of the Canterbury Tales, and especially their  
 prologue, should be attentively read by the stu-  
 dent of poetry, who would form a just estimate  
 of Chaucer's genius.

Influence of  
 poetry on  
 the reforma-  
 tion of the  
 church.

Of poetry in general, it has been frequently re-  
 marked, that its earliest strains were the offspring  
 of devotion. It was thus with the descendants of  
 Abraham: and among gentile nations, the harp  
 would seem to have been first struck in honour of  
 their gods. The drama itself was a creation of  
 the Greek mythology, and a part of their religious  
 ritual; and it is curious to observe, that its re-  
 appearance in Europe was as an appendage to  
 religion. In those scenic exhibitions, to which  
 ecclesiastics were so much attached during the  
 season of Lent, the steps which issued in the cre-  
 ation or in the redemption of the world, and the



most striking portions of scripture history, all of which their chroniclers had previously versified, were acted in detail. Such performances are still encouraged in catholic countries; and as they gradually passed into the hands of the lay minstrels, they became the vehicle of much wholesome satire on the manners of the clergy, and continued to be until the age of the reformation. The troubadours, who united the office of the minstrel and the poet, and were in fact the bards of modern Europe, rose with the opening of the twelfth century. On many of these, considerable praise was bestowed by Dante and Petrarch; but their printed compositions have not equalled the anticipations which the eulogies of such men would necessarily excite. It is probable that most of their pieces have suffered from translation; and greatly more, from losing that accompaniment of the voice and instrument, to which they were no doubt adjusted with considerable ingenuity. To the troubadours much licence was conceded in handling the weapons of satire; and while some of them sung with delight the downfall of heresy, others, and even a greater number, were no less disposed to lash the vices, and question the pretensions of the accredited priesthood.<sup>11</sup> A dis-

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V.

<sup>11</sup> The following is a specimen of the manner in which the catholic troubadour was accustomed to address the heretics of his day: "See now, heretic, if thou dost not commit an infamous perfidy; thou liest like a robber, and thou art in truth the thief of souls. If thou refusest to believe, behold the fire which is burning thy companions ready to consume thee. What, still indo-

"cile? Thou wilt not yield! But the flames and the torture await thee, and thou art going to experience them. God ought to punish thee in hell worse than the demons. Before thou art delivered up to the flames, as thou wilt be if thou dost not retract, I wish to ask thee, &c. Whoever does not believe these things ought not to complain if he be seized and burnt. Every country where

CHAP. tinguished living writer has remarked of the  
 V. tedious collections made by Millot from this class of men, that “they will always be useful to the  
 “enquirer into the manners and opinions of the  
 “middle ages, from the numerous illustrations  
 “which they contain of two general facts,—the  
 “extreme dissoluteness of morals in the higher  
 “ranks,—and the prevailing animosity of all  
 “classes against the clergy.”<sup>15</sup> What is thus stated of the poems of the troubadours, is equally true of the romances of chivalry.

The Roman  
 de la Rose.

To the latter class of compositions, as its name imports, belongs the *Roman de la Rose*. This poem, which reached the alarming extent of twenty thousand verses, was the joint production of William de Lorris, and John de Meun; and was completed a little before the close of the thirteenth century. The work is an elaborate allegory; and notwithstanding some puerile conceits, which occur both in the structure and in the details of the story, and some other defects, it is one of no

“thy perfidious doctrine has been  
 “spread ought to be swallowed up.  
 “Unless thou confessest instantly, the  
 “fire is already lighted; thou shalt be  
 “proclaimed by trumpet through the  
 “city, and the people will assemble to  
 “see thee burnt.” *Hist. Troub.* pp.  
 48, 49, 52, 57, 59, 60. But this mer-  
 ciless wrath was fitted to produce a  
 re-action of violence. The following  
 is from the pen of a writer of the same  
 order, who had witnessed the massa-  
 cres of Toulouse: “I know they wish  
 “me ill because I have made a sir-  
 “vente against the false tribe of Rome,  
 “the source of all decline. I am not  
 “astonished that the world is full of  
 “error. It is deceitful Rome which  
 “soweth it with trouble and war. Your

“covetousness blinds you, you shear  
 “the wool of your sheep too close. If  
 “my prayers could be heard, I would  
 “bruise your beak. Rome, in whom  
 “all the Greek is found! Rome, of  
 “evil manners and of evil faith, who  
 “has made so great a carnage, who  
 “has established her seat at the bot-  
 “tom of the abyss of perdition; may  
 “God never pardon you your pilgrim-  
 “age to Avignon. Without a cause  
 “have you put innumerable people to  
 “death. May the demons carry you  
 “to the fire of hell.” *Ibid.* 449—451.  
 The writer giving publicity to such  
 sentiments, must have been aware that  
 they were not peculiar to himself. See  
 Turner’s *Hist.* i. 447, 448.

<sup>15</sup> Hallam’s *View of Society*, &c.

ordinary merit, whether viewed in connexion with the age that produced it, or with the inventions of the same class by which it was preceded. The master passion in the tale is love; and this, together with every abstract quality which might be supposed to retard or facilitate the possession of its object, the writer has personified. When the untaught genius of Bunyan conferred so much dramatic attraction on the same species of machinery, he was doubtless ignorant of the work of de Lorris, and probably of its various imitations. But Thomson possessed them all as his models, when lavishing his refinement and power on *The Castle of Indolence*. It is somewhat more than the latter half of the *Roman de la Rose*, which is attributed to John de Meun; and though the former portion of the work is described as possessing most of poetical feeling and animation, the remaining is more worthy of notice in this place, since, in some of its parts, it more directly illustrates the religion of the period.<sup>16</sup>

A dispute had arisen sometime since, between the mendicant orders, respecting the latitude in which their vows of poverty should be interpreted. By a numerous party, a papal bull was procured, empowering them to build convents, and furnish them, on condition that such property should belong to the see of Rome, so as to be disposed of at the pleasure of the pontiffs. But this, the more severe, or, as they were afterwards called, the more spiritual, considered as a violation of their rule, and as an opening to every abuse

<sup>16</sup> Godwin's Chaucer, ii. c. i. 2.

CHAP. V. which had so long disgraced the monastic establishments. Aided by the prophetic genius of the abbot Joachim, these spiritual controversialists discovered their founder, St. Francis, in the angel described in the Apocalypse as flying through the midst of heaven bearing the everlasting gospel. Charmed with this new light, the general theory of the Calabrian prophet was presently adopted; and it was boldly affirmed, that three dispensations of religion were appointed to the world; the first being that of the Old Testament, and proceeding from the Father; the second, that of the New, which had proceeded from the Son; and the last, that of the everlasting gospel, which, after the year 1260, would be found to proceed from the Holy Ghost. This gospel Joachim had been inspired to write, and the surpassing blessedness of the new economy was to be introduced by the labours of the spiritual brotherhood, as being alone the disciples of evangelical poverty.<sup>17</sup>

St. Amour. In publishing these dogmas, the mendicants found their principal antagonist in the celebrated William de St. Amour, who, in his memorable work entitled, *De Periculis Novissimorum Temporum*, describes them as being the Man of sin foretold by St. Paul. Of this treatise, an abstract is interwoven by John de Meun, in the *Roman de la Rose*. There are two points which are urged with great emphasis by both writers. "First,

<sup>17</sup> Mosheim. iii. 209—211. Cave. Hist Lit. Art. Joachimus. The prophecies of Joachim have been frequently printed on the continent. And down to very recent times they appear

to have possessed considerable influence over the mind of the visionary, and to have been sometimes treated with respect by persons of another class. See Mosheim, iii. 238, 289.

“ the conduct of these friars in insinuating them-  
 “ selves into the houses of individuals, hearing  
 “ their confessions, giving them absolution, and  
 “ seducing them from their spiritual pastors and  
 “ bishops, under whose care and superintendence  
 “ the established order of the christian hierarchy  
 “ had placed them. John de Meun alleges, in  
 “ a satirical manner, that the friars are very little  
 “ disposed to exercise their powers of edification  
 “ upon the poor, but that they confine themselves  
 “ to the eminent, the powerful, and the wealthy.  
 “ They urge, he says, in vindication of this con-  
 “ duct, that such men are more exposed to the  
 “ temptations of the world, have more sins to  
 “ answer for, and therefore stand in more urgent  
 “ need of spiritual assistance. The other point,  
 “ very elaborately treated against the mendicants,  
 “ is their idleness, and their mode of subsisting  
 “ upon the earnings of men more industrious than  
 “ themselves. The friars alleged that Christ and  
 “ his apostles lived in the same manner, wan-  
 “ derers upon the face of the earth, and without  
 “ visible means of subsistence. But against this,  
 “ their opponents urged certain texts of St. Paul,  
 “ in which he recommends to his followers to  
 “ work with their own hands, and appeals to  
 “ those he taught, whether at any time he ac-  
 “ cepted any man’s silver or gold. St. Augustine  
 “ is also quoted to prove that devotion has by no  
 “ means so exclusive a claim upon us, as to su-  
 “ persede the exercise of secular industry.”<sup>18</sup>

The evils stated in this extract will be remembered as those which provoked the displeasure

<sup>18</sup> Godwin’s Chaucer, ii. c. ii.

CHAP. of Wycliffe; and the reasonings opposed to them  
 V.  
 — are precisely such as are of constant occurrence in the writings of the English reformer. So loud, however, and so general was the condemnation of the eternal gospel, that Alexander the fourth considered it prudent to order its suppression. This decision of the pontiff called forth an embassy in the following year, with Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas at its head; and it was granted, that a sentence of banishment should be immediately pronounced against their adversary, St. Amour, and that his obnoxious work should be burnt as heretical, by the public executioner. But on the death of Alexander, the exile returned to Paris, and, protected by the university, he continued his attacks on the authors of his disgrace, to the close of his life. When we consider the heavy and involved character of the *Roman de la Rose*, its great popularity, from the period of its appearance to the age of Luther, is not a little surprising; as including the substance of the controversy which so powerfully attracted St. Amour and Wycliffe, its influence on the approaching reformation was not trivial. By the early reformers, its celebrity was regarded with exultation; while among the more zealous of the Romanists, it was the object of special abhorrence. Gerson, whose name is of such frequent occurrence in the history of the council of Constance, affirmed before that assembly, that unless he could suppose the author of that composition had lived to repent of his labour, he would no more pray for his soul than for that of Judas.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Godwin's Chaucer, *ubi supra*.

That Chaucer had laboured to render so obnoxious a book more generally known, would be sufficient to excite the suspicions of the orthodox, and to induce the reformers to number him with their friends. In addition to which, no small portion of the materials found in his own productions, was evidently derived from that work; and those corruptions of the ecclesiastical system, which the *Roman de la Rose* tended so deeply to unveil, are assailed with equal freedom in the *Canterbury Tales*. Thus the story of the *Sompnoure* describes the practices of the mendicants, as supplying to the infernal regions the larger portion of its inhabitants; reserving its foulest locality for swarms of friars. Whether preaching in the church, the castle, or the cottage, or performing the function of confessors at the bedside of the sick, the religion of these men is viewed as a mere craft, in which fables, falsehood, and cruelty, are made to favour the schemes of avarice, and to pander to the lowest sensuality. The *Pardoner's Tale* is a farther exhibition of the same species of artifice. His favourite text is, that the love of money is the root of evil, and it is, at the same time, his steady policy, to increase his store by the abuse of every fear which the popular superstition might be made to excite. While such is the character which the *Pardoner* is made to give of himself, and which the *Sompnoure* affirms of the mendicant, the friar in his turn asserts equal villanies to be the every-day practice of his accuser. It was the office of the *Sompnoure* to cite all persons who were accused of irreligion or of immoral conduct before the spiritual courts, and

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—



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— to enforce the penalties awarded to the guilty by those tribunals. In performing this service, he is said to practise the most odious injustice and oppression; and the jurisdiction of the prelates is described, as embracing corruptions which fully warrant the indignant complaints of Wycliffe respecting it.<sup>20</sup> It is certain that Chaucer would hardly have employed the whole strength of his genius in completing these and similar portraits, had he not known that, with many of his contemporaries, their truth would be speedily recognised.

Notice of  
Longland.

Nor was Chaucer alone in employing the language of poetry to satirize the disorders of the church. It was about the year 1350, when he had but recently passed his minority, that the poem, called the Visions of Peirce Plowman, was written. Robert Longland, a priest, and a native of Salop, is regarded as its author; and with the allegorical character of the piece, the poet has contrived to interweave some bold censures of prevalent vices, but especially of those allied to superstition, or observable in the ecclesiastical orders. Chaucer's best compositions of this class were subsequent to the decease of Wycliffe.

<sup>20</sup> See the Canterbury Tales. The poet who states in his prologue that,

“ In stede of weping and praieres,  
Men mote give silver to the pour  
freres,”

thus describes the Pardoner :

“ But of this craft fro Berwick unto  
Ware,  
Ne was ther swiche an other par-  
donere ;—

For in his male he hadde a pilwebere,  
Which as he saide was our Ladies viel ;  
He said he hadde a gobbet of the seyl

Thatte Seint Peter hadde, when that he  
went

Upon the see till Jesu Christ him kent :  
He had a cross of laton full of stones,  
And in a glass he hadde pigges bones,  
But with these reliques, whanne that he  
found

A pour person dwelling up on lond,  
Upon a *day* he gat him more money  
Than that the parson gat in *monthes*  
*tweie*;

And thus with fained flattering and japes  
He made the persone and the people  
his apes.”

Longland may be described as his precursor. CHAP.  
V.  
 Six years had passed since the publishing of the Visions of Peirce Plowman, when the reformer's first treatise, entitled, *The Last Age of the Church*, was written. Men had previously arisen, who had opposed the same weapons to the same evils, but their intrepidity and genius were greatly surpassed by Longland. It is probable that he found an early grave; and, similar as were many of his sentiments to those of Wycliffe, he would, perhaps, have shrunk from the daring measures recommended by the reformer, as the only means of expelling the corruptions which they equally deplored. It is certain that the veneration conferred on the poetry of Longland by the Lollards was the principal cause of its preservation. He had foretold the approaching reformation with a distinctness that astonished and delighted the men of a later age; and while the patriot, the Lutheran, and the Calvinist, have since united to perpetuate his fame, the partisans of superstition and of despotism have not failed to honour him with their marked enmity. So popular were the Visions of the Plowman, that other compositions make their appearance at intervals under the same title. Hence, we have not only the Visions of the Plowman, but the Plowman's Creed, and the Plowman's Tale. The authors of the latter productions are unknown; but from the age of Longland, the name of such pieces was sufficient to prepare the reader for an exposure of clerical delinquency, and a bold utterance of the language of reform.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> See Warton's *History of Poetry*, i. sect. 8, 9; and Godwin's *Chaucer*

## CHAPTER VI.

NUMBER OF WYCLIFFE'S DISCIPLES.—THE LOLLARDS CONSISTED OF TWO CLASSES.—NOTICE OF JOHN OF NORTHAMPTON.—PROSPECTS OF THE REFORMERS UNDER RICHARD THE SECOND.—TESTIMONY OF KNIGHTON RESPECTING THE NUMBER AND THE CHARACTER OF WYCLIFFE'S FOLLOWERS.—ANALYSIS OF THE PLOWMAN'S TALE.—THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS OF THE DISCIPLES OF WYCLIFFE.—CHARACTER OF HIS "POOR PRIESTS."—ANALYSIS OF THE TRACT, "WHY POOR PRIESTS HAVE NO BENEFICES."—NOTICE OF WILLIAM THORP.

CHAP. VI. THE existence of such literature as we have seen to be connected with the names of Longland and Chaucer, suggests some important conclusions as to the state of society during their time. If we consider the supply as at all regulated by the demand, it follows, that, among our ancestors of the fourteenth century, the friends to ecclesiastical reform constituted a formidable body, both in numbers and intelligence. These, however, as in the case of the writers above named, were not always to be viewed as receiving the entire doctrine of Wycliffe. If by the term Lollard, be meant, not only those who had embraced every important principle avowed by our reformer, but those also, who without proceeding to such lengths, were known to echo many of his complaints, we may, perhaps, safely conclude with Knighton, that in the year 1382 every second man in the kingdom was of that sect.<sup>1</sup> At such a moment, to

Number of  
Wycliffe's  
disciples.

They con-  
sisted of two  
classes.

<sup>1</sup> De Eventibus Angliæ, ad Ann.

adopt any part of the language distinguishing the disciples of Wycliffe, would be to incur the reproach of having adopted the most obnoxious of his tenets. Hence it sometimes happened, that the men who were loud in their censures of some branches of papal and prelatical encroachment, were equally loud in their censures of certain doctrines, as those maintained by the rector of Lutterworth. To persons who were concerned to obtain the praise of being wise and moderate men, there remained scarcely any other mode of placing their orthodoxy beyond suspicion, and in many cases even this was insufficient.

Among the more decided adherents, both to the political and the religious creed of our re-  
CHAP. VI.  
Notice of John of Northampton.  
 former, a place should be assigned to John of Northampton. This opulent citizen is described by Walsingham as a Lollard. While mayor of London, in 1382, he braved the displeasure of the clergy, by invading the province of their spiritual courts. Those improved notions of government, which in every state had been found to keep pace with the progress of its cities and its commerce, were eagerly embraced by the inhabitants of the English metropolis. A new power had arisen in the community, and one, the strength of which the elder authorities were obliged to feel once and again, before they could learn to credit its existence. The baronial castle was ceasing to be the only place of authority, and every gradation of modern society was beginning to appear. This is evident from the measures of John of Northampton, and from that state of popular feeling, in the absence of which, to have entertained his plans

CHAP. VI. for a moment, would have been a weakness foreign to his character. He not only complained of neglect on the part of the clergy, considered as the appointed guardians of the public morals ; but accused them of a covetousness, which had frequently led them to compound with the most notorious offenders ; affirming, at the same time, that unless some wholesome severities were resorted to, the dissolute practices which became daily more prevalent through the city, must be expected to bring the displeasure of Heaven upon its inhabitants, and upon the nation. Accordingly, as chief magistrate of the capital, he seized on some of the more vicious persons of both sexes, and depriving them of their hair, ordered them to be led in procession through the streets, as in cases of theft. The bishop and his dependants stormed at this intrusion on the sphere of their acknowledged jurisdiction : but their wrath was fruitless. In the following year, Northampton was re-elected, and through both periods of office, failed not to render himself the terror of the licentious, in a licentious age. He was aware of being supported by the more reputable of his fellow citizens ; and their joint conduct is described by Walsingham, as the effect of that spirit of insolence, presumption, and heresy, which had long characterized the Londoners, and scattered its infection over other cities.<sup>2</sup>

Prospects of  
the reform-  
ers at this  
crisis.

It is mostly from expressions thus loose, and general, that we have to infer the state of the protestant doctrine in our cities before the ac-

<sup>2</sup> Walsingham, Hist. 1382. Knighton, ad Ann. Stowe's Survey of London. Godwin's Chaucer, c. xlix.

cession of the house of Lancaster. We know, CHAP.  
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indeed, that the doctrines of the reformation were —————  
more or less known to all classes; and that while various opinions were very naturally entertained, as to the extent in which the proposed change was desirable, the majority of the nation would, probably, have acquiesced in a revolution quite as matured as that accomplished by Henry the eighth, rather than submit to a continuance of the evils which all parties had so often professed to deprecate. Nor is it, perhaps, too much to assert, that a prince capable of securing the attachment of the people might, at this crisis, have put the strength of the papal power at defiance, and have controlled the national priesthood at pleasure. They were but few, indeed, among the clergy, who had hitherto betrayed a disposition favourable to the opinions of Wycliffe. But unsupported by the majority of the nation, and certainly by its intelligence, as in the supposed case they would speedily have been, we may presume that the firmness of most of them would soon have yielded to the current. Such, at least, has been the pliancy of the same order of men in later times. The ease with which the proudest members of the hierarchy were humbled by Edward the first, and that while scarcely a ray of the light of the reformation illumined the darkness, and before the papacy had suffered any material diminution of its power, is a fact, among many, conferring no little plausibility on this opinion. Oxford was the centre from which the sentiments of Wycliffe had emanated to the different quarters of the kingdom; and though the court, and the

CHAP. hierarchy, were after a while united in the effort  
VI.

to exclude his doctrine from that seminary, it was only with a partial measure of success. Previous to the reformer's exclusion from that university, the majority of the students appear to have been prepared for the adoption of a more scriptural creed ; and favoured, in this respect, by the national authorities, or even left to themselves, they would ere long have given a strictly protestant character to that important establishment. The study of the ancient classics, was indeed revived considerably toward the opening of the sixteenth century ; but it may be safely credited, that the capacity of judging on the questions of legislation, and religion, evinced by the educated classes, and by a large portion of the people in this country before the death of Richard the second, was far from being regained when the English sceptre passed into the hands of Henry the eighth. The interval which preceded that event, was one of some hopeful changes on the continent, but in this kingdom it was a time of fearful declension ; and had not the seed time under Edward the third, and his successor, been so devoutly improved, the return of more auspicious influences from above, would not so suddenly have ripened the surface into fruitfulness and harvest.

Testimony  
of Knighton  
respecting  
the number  
and charac-  
ter of  
Wycliffe's  
disciples.

The language of Knighton, with respect to the number of Wycliffe's disciples, is somewhat more definite than that of Walsingham. It is that also of a contemporary, and though to be admitted with caution, is too important to be passed over. In the year 1382, he states that "their number



“very much increased, and that, starting like  
 “saplings, from the root of a tree, they were  
 “multiplied, and filled every place within the  
 “compass of the land.”<sup>3</sup> So far, indeed, had  
 they prevailed, as to bring over to their sect,  
 “the greater part of the people.” A concession  
 to the same effect is reluctantly made by Sir  
 Thomas More. It must, at the same time, be  
 remembered, that Knighton, whose information  
 even on contemporary topics is often strangely  
 imperfect, resided in Leicester, within that  
 diocese where the labours of Wycliffe and of  
 his assistants had been most abundant. What  
 the historian has more than once affirmed with  
 respect to the whole kingdom, was no doubt true  
 with respect to that division of it. But while  
 within those limits, the larger portion of the peo-  
 ple were more or less attached to the doctrines  
 of reform, it would appear from such records in  
 the diocesan registers as relate to the subsequent  
 persecutions, that persons of this character were  
 more thinly scattered over other parts of the land.  
 Still, in every city and town, there were those by  
 whom such opinions were understood and revered,  
 and from such localities the leaven was variously  
 extended to the mass of the people.<sup>4</sup>

The same historian, in attempting to account  
 for this fact, which he deploras as the most evil  
 feature of the times, has remarked that the sec-  
 tarian teachers “always pretended in their dis-  
 “courses to have a great respect for the law of  
 “God, or, as they expressed themselves, *goddis law*,

<sup>3</sup> De Eventibus Angliæ, ad Ann.

<sup>4</sup> Lewis, c. x. See also Chap. ix. of this volume; and Fox, ubi supra.

CHAP. VI. “to which they declared themselves to be strictly  
— conformed both in their opinions and their conduct.” The effect of this appeal to the scriptures, as opposed to that rival authority which had been assumed by the church, is said to be, that a great many well-meaning people were deluded, and were induced to unite with the innovators, lest they should seem to be enemies to the law of God. This writer has also attempted to describe the character of the new sectaries, and his statements, though but partially true, and in some respects contradictory, are deserving of notice. It may be correct, that “like their master, they were too eloquent, and too much for other people, in all contentions by word of mouth; that mighty in words, they exceeded all men in making speeches, out-talking every one in litigious disputations.” So marked also was the contrast between the christianity of the scriptures, now first disclosed to these persons, and that which they found sanctioned by popes and councils, that we are not in any measure surprised to find, that “both men and women, though never so lately converted to this sect, were distinguished by the same modes of speech, and by a wonderful agreement in the same opinions.” Novel as the event appeared, the light introduced rendered the impurities which the darkness had concealed so far visible, as to have precisely this effect, except indeed, where the influence of prejudice, the power of which is commonly derived from a regard to some selfish interest, was such as to produce its wonted evasion of evidence. But when

the historian proceeds to describe this people, as remarkable for “a proud and warlike disposition, — and as resembling the disciples of Mahomet, “more than the followers of Christ,” it is not difficult to determine the degree of credit which should be attached to his assertions. It was among the sins frequently imputed to them, that they discountenanced war, and questioned even the right of the magistrate to take away life; while the utmost of their claims, at any period, was, that the civil power should protect them in their persons and property, and that they should not be held accountable for their religious opinions to the ruling church. Indeed, from the above statements, it is evident, that the sufficiency of the scriptures, and the right of private judgment, constituted the foundation of the edifice which the followers of Wycliffe laboured to erect; and their acknowledged adroitness in debate, suggests what kind of weapon it was in which they confided for success when employed in defending it.

But there are other sources of information respecting the character of Wycliffe’s disciples, which are more worthy of confidence, and in every view more satisfactory. The poem called *The Plowman’s Tale*, was written before the death of Richard the second, and perhaps before that of our reformer. It is valuable, because plainly intended to embody the points of controversy between the Lollards and the orthodox; and to illustrate the manner in which they were accustomed to advocate their respective tenets. The production consists of a dialogue between a

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Analysis of  
the Plow-  
man’s Tale.

CHAP. griffin and a pelican, the latter representing the  
 VI. true church, who, like her Lord, has been called to nourish her offspring with her blood; the former, serving as the emblem of the hierarchy, because strong, soaring, and oppressive. In the conclusion, a struggle ensues, during which, a phoenix appears, in aid of the defenceless pelican, and destroys her antagonist, together with a host of foul birds collected as allies. The Plowman, having finished his narrative, observes that he is not to be considered as a party to the quarrel described, but simply as giving a faithful report of its progress and result.

“The pelican who  
 To these lollers ylaide his lure,”

commences with a characteristic praise of meekness, and of mercy, as enjoined above all things in the gospel; and as especially commended by the example of Christ, whose favourite emblem, accordingly, was the lamb. As the Saviour was in this world, so it is contended his professed followers should be, contemptuous of worldly honour and of worldly gain; and the clergy who yield to opposite propensities, are viewed as traitors to Christ, and as doomed to fall low as Lucifer. It is matter of sorrowful complaint, that while some would be higher than the emperor, others must exchange the friar's garb and staff for the dress and the implements of the soldier; and that many, to maintain a state of luxurious splendour, resembling, or even surpassing, that of princes, could descend, and with all the regularity of habit, to numberless acts of fraud and oppression. Yet while thus bearing

all the marks of Antichrist, to suggest concerning some of them, that they were even liable to sin, was to be in danger of destruction. By the doctrine of the pope's supremacy, also, the commandments of God are said to have been stripped of their authority, and Christ himself to have become the Head of the church only in name. The profaneness of ecclesiastics is next reprov'd, and particularly their simony; and while the latter sin affected every department of the hierarchy, their known proneness to debauchery is noticed as extending the worst evils to many a domestic circle. Notwithstanding the prevalence of such intrigues, the same vices in the laity were sometimes visited with the severest penalties in the spiritual courts. It was nevertheless unblushingly affirmed by these holy culprits, that, unless confession of sin should be made to them, its remission must be foregone for ever. But the supposition that the authority claimed by the doctrine of the keys, was really entrusted to such victims of sensuality; or to others, who, if free from that sort of vice, were men of the feeblest perceptions; or to a third class, who, without being fools or sensualists, frequently added the pride of Alexander to the cruelty of Nero, is treated with powerful scorn. By resorting to the use of that carnal sword which Peter was forbidden to employ, and by an abuse of that spiritual power which was committed to him only in common with his brethren, the pontiffs are said to invade every security conferred by the laws, either on the property, or the persons of Englishmen. The assent of the commonalty is

CHAP. VI. declared to be necessary to every measure of taxation; but the pope, who obtained his elevation from the emperor, ere long to become his superior, is regarded as viewing the power of the English constitution in the light of a rival authority; and the king and the lords are admonished to bear this in mind, and to prove themselves the shield of the nation against the meditated encroachments of a merciless despotism.<sup>5</sup> In enumerating the many expedients of the priesthood to gratify their avarice, the worship of images, and the miracles falsely attributed to them are not overlooked; and passing from the corruptions of the mendicant orders, and of the secular clergy, the same kind of complaint is extended to the monastic societies, who are considered as equally removed from the requirements of scripture and from the ancient spirit of their institute.

To this series of objections, the advocates of the hierarchy are made to reply, and with visible indignation, that were the papal supremacy to be destroyed, the church could have neither head nor order; that to deprive the ecclesiastical body of its wealth, must be of necessity to render the ministers of religion contemptible; and that as the Creator is assuredly the highest of all sovereigns, his worship should be accompanied by every external splendour that wealth or genius

<sup>5</sup> " The king ne taketh nat his men  
But by assent of the comminalte,  
But these eche yere not raunsom hem  
Maisterfully, more than dothe he.  
Wonder is that the parliamente  
And al the lordes of this londe,

Hereto taken no lite entente  
To help the people out of hir honde,  
For they ben harder in hir bonde  
Worse bete, and crueller ybrende  
Thou to the king is understonde;  
God him help this for to anende !"

may bring to it. But it is affirmed in return, CHAP.  
VI.  
--- that Christ is, and is alone, the Head of the church; that he has furthermore prohibited his disciples from acknowledging any other master on earth; and that the costly appendages of christian worship should be rather sought in the state of the mind, in the justice of its principles, in charity, poverty of spirit, hope in God, and a pure conscience. These enlightened sentiments are then assailed as the cant of a faction, and of a faction whose activities are ever the result of envy, covetousness, and a love of anarchy; and it is boisterously asserted, that each man should deem it enough to live devoutly himself, and "let other men live as they list." But the tenets thus assailed are repeated, and with a deeper emphasis; and the anathema, the stake, and the gallows, are passionately named, as forming the only kind of argument which shall henceforth be employed to crush these pestilent heresies. The heresiarch calmly replies, that the curse of Nero was never more pointless than is that of a churchman in such a cause; adding, that to suffer for the sake of the gospel has ever been the lot of its truest disciples.<sup>6</sup>

Such is the substance of the *Plowman's Tale*, a work throughout which there is that constant reference to scripture precept, and to scripture example, which distinguished the mode of war-

<sup>6</sup> See Chaucer's Works. The *Plowman's Crede* describes an enquirer as seeking religious advice from the four orders of friars, and as becoming disgusted on witnessing the practice of those vices in their several convents,

which were commonly imputed to them. He next meets with a plowman, who confirms all his impressions respecting the hypocrisies of the religious orders, and instructs him in the doctrine of the reformers. See Warton, i. sect. ix.



CHAP. fare adopted by the followers of Wycliffe; and  
 VI. — which so generally confounded their adversaries, as to leave them no hope of preserving their authority, except by the aid of brute force. Nor is the degree of improvement which the theology connected with these principles of reform exhibited wholly a matter of conjecture. In all the maxims stated above, we perceive a direct tendency to separate religion from the influence by which it had been so greatly corrupted. While distinguishing so wisely between the formalities of superstition, and the nature of a religion founded on principle, and having its home in the affections; they are expressive of an equal solicitude to call off the reliance of men from the supposed power of the priesthood, with respect to their state hereafter.

Theological  
 opinions of  
 the disciples  
 of Wycliffe.

But the wisdom of attempting to destroy that false confidence which superstition had created, may be seriously questioned, unless accompanied by an effort to make known that better source of religious hope and religious motive, which is revealed in the gospel. Nor can the reformers of the fourteenth century be charged with a want of attention to this fact. On the contrary, with their attacks on the delusive theories of the age, respecting the mode of obtaining the favour of Heaven, they were careful to unite an appeal to the scripture doctrine of a free remission, in virtue of His mediation, who has redeemed the church of God by his own blood. The theological opinions of Wycliffe are known, and it is certain that these, which were in substance the creed of the poor priests, his coadjutors, were widely

disseminated by the activities of those devoted men. It may be added, also, that the reformer frequently speaks of his contemporaries, in a manner which discovers that many, on receiving his general doctrine, became, in his judgment, better men, in the feelings which belong to the nature of piety, as well as in their regard of social obligation. Accordingly, the most devout of his doctrines are rarely noticed as though peculiar to himself, but rather as maintained by him in common with "many true men."

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The motives which render us curious to possess whatever may be known with respect to the character of Wycliffe's disciples, must impart a degree of interest to such particulars as may be ascertained concerning the persons to whom we have often referred under the name of "poor priests," and of whom the reformer frequently writes in terms of high commendation. From the preamble to the persecuting law, so dishonestly obtained by Courtney in 1382, it appears that these laborious teachers were accustomed to journey from town to town, and from county to county; that, clothed in habits of peculiar simplicity, and without any licence from the local ordinaries, it was their manner to preach their doctrine openly, not only in churches and church-yards, but also in the midst of markets and fairs, and, indeed, in all places where multitudes were convened. When cited by their ecclesiastical superiors to answer before them, on account of these disorders, they are described as treating the authority claimed by such officers with contempt. The alternative that would be submitted to them,

Character of  
his poor  
priests.

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VI.

on appearing before such a tribunal, they well knew to be silence or imprisonment; and as they were not at all concerned about the spiritual censures which their conduct might incur, it was natural that a summons from such quarters should be rarely obeyed. In the same document, it is stated, that “by their subtle and ingenious words, they contrived to draw the people to their sermons, and to maintain them in their errors,” from which it appears that the new preachers were generally popular.

Analysis of  
the tract,  
“Why Poor  
Priests have  
no Benefices.”

It was to give some explanation of these novel proceedings, and to counteract the design of the inquisitorial statute which was meant to put an end to them, that Wycliffe published his tract on the question, “Why Poor Priests have no Benefices?” A brief analysis of this treatise will place the character of the men to whom it relates distinctly before us. Three reasons are assigned for their refusal of benefices. First, the dread of simony; secondly, the fear of mispending poor men’s goods; and thirdly, the hope of doing more good by itinerant labours, than by limiting their exertions to a single parish.

The customs connected with the system of patronage are said to be such, that whether an appointment to a benefice proceed from a prelate, or from a secular lord, the demands usually made on the incumbent are of a description which must expose him to the guilt of simony. To prelates, he must render the first fruits, and many other unlawful contributions; or he must descend to hold some worldly office, inconsistent with the life of a priest, and far from being taught by the

example of Christ, or of his apostles. Men who feel no scruple in conforming to these customs, however vicious or incompetent, may obtain with ease the care of many thousand souls; “but if there be any simple man who desireth to live well, and to teach truly the law of God, he shall be deemed a hypocrite, a new teacher, a heretic, and not suffered to come to any benefice. If in any little poor place he shall live a poor life, he shall be so persecuted and slandered, that he shall be put out by wiles, extortions, frauds, and worldly violence, and imprisoned or burnt.” While such was the treatment experienced by the enlightened and conscientious clergyman, though receiving his appointment from the prelates, lay patrons will not be supposed to have been less affected by the spirit of avarice and irreligion. It is observed that “some lords, to cover their simony, will not take for themselves, but kerchiefs for the lady, or a palfry, or a tun of wine. And when some lords would present a good man, then some ladies are the means of having a dancer presented, or a tripper on tapits, or a hunter, or a hawker, or a wild player of summer gambols.” These practices are all denounced as treason against God; first, in the case of prelates and lords, who, by selecting such men, betray their trust, and become the vicars of Satan; secondly, in the instance of curates, who comply with such customs, and who, beginning their career in treachery with respect to their Maker, are not likely to prove faithful in the obligations which relate to society; and finally, in the case of

CHAP. VI. confessors, who fail honestly to censure such evils, ——— “lest they should give offence, and thereby lose “their friendships and gifts.” One reason, therefore, why poor priests have no benefices, is, that it was scarcely possible to accept of them without in many ways contracting the guilt of simony.

The second reason of their conduct, in this particular, was the fear of being compelled to mispend poor men's goods. Whatever of clerical revenue shall remain, after food and clothing are provided, is said to come under this denomination. But to be inducted to a living, much gold must be given to a gradation of ecclesiastical officers; and afterwards, many rich entertainments must be made; sometimes for the gratification of lay patrons, and sometimes as a duty owing to the higher clergy when performing their “feigned visitations.” From such customs, it is said to follow that beneficed clergymen, “shall not spend “their tithes and offerings after a good conscience, and God's law, but must waste them on “the rich and the idle.” It is observed, also, that “on each holy day these small curates shall “commonly have letters from their ordinaries to “summon and to curse poor men, and for nought, “except the covetousness of the clerks of Antichrist; and if they refuse to summon and curse “them, though they know not why they should, “they shall be injured, and summoned from day “to day, from one far place to a farther, or be “accursed, or lose their benefice, or their profits.” Refusing to become parties to such proceedings, they are instantly reproached as the enemies of all episcopal jurisdiction; and to avoid that expen-

diture which the ostentatious and the luxurious CHAP. VI.  
manners of the clergy in that age required, was to —————  
become the object of almost every kind of persecution. “So many cursed deceits,” observes the reformer, “hath Antichrist brought up by his  
“worldly clerks, to make curates mispend poor  
“men’s goods, and not truly to do their office; or  
“else to forsake all, and to leave the clerks of  
“Antichrist as lords of this world, to rob the  
“people by feigned censures, and to teach the  
“lore of the fiend, both by open preaching, and  
“the example of an accursed life.” Hence it appears, that if to become conformists, in the particulars stated, was to misapply the patrimony of the poor, and to convert a spiritual office into the instrument of secular oppression and aggrandizement,—to be silent amid the prevalence of such evils, was regarded as not less opposed to fidelity. To be without a benefice, was not to be released from the obligation of preaching; and where the doors of the church were closed, the voice of these conscientious men might often be heard in its precincts, or in the high way to the towns and villages of the land. So many, indeed, and so serious were the corruptions in which the beneficed clergyman was expected to participate, that the root which they had acquired in the ecclesiastical system, is viewed as a phenomenon admitting of no explanation, except as forming the signal chastisement of heaven, incurred by the reckless depravity which had marked the later ages of the world.

The last reason why some poor priests have no benefices, and that to which the greatest

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—

importance is attached, is, that by such a restriction, they should probably “be hindered from better occupation, and from more profiting of holy church.” The charge which they had received from above, is declared to have respect to men in general, and to be binding, “wherever they may help their brethren to heavenward, whether by teaching, praying, or example giving.” This general mission is conceived to require “a general cure of charity, as had Christ and his apostles.” It is observed, also, “that by this they most surely save themselves, and help their brethren; and they are free to fly from one city to another, when they are persecuted by the clerks of Antichrist, as Christ biddeth, and the gospel. And thus they may best, without any challenging of men, go and dwell among the people where they shall most profit, and for the time convenient, coming and going after the moving of the Holy Ghost, and not being hindered from doing what is best by the jurisdiction of sinful men. Also, they follow Christ and his apostles more, in taking voluntary alms of the people whom they teach, than in taking dymes and offerings, by customs which sinful men have ordained in the time of grace.” Were these primitive manners to return to the church, the effect it is contended would be, that “those alms which the people might and should give to true priests who truly keep their order,” would be freely rendered; and all pomp and luxury being excluded from the hierarchy, the principal motives to that covetousness which had so pervaded the clergy, and



proved so afflictive to the laity, would be destroyed. To expect that the people should abstain from any sinful indulgence, while their guides are evidently enslaved by it, is treated as folly. "For these dreads," it is remarked, "and for many thousand more; and for to be more like to the life of Christ and his apostles; and for to profit more their own souls, and other men's, some poor priests think, with God, to travel about where they shall most profit, and by the evidence that God giveth them, while they have time, and a little bodily strength and youth. Nevertheless, they condemn not curates who do well their office, and dwell where they shall most profit, and teach truly and stably the law of God against false prophets, and the accursed deceptions of the fiend. Christ, for his endless mercy, help his priests and common people to beware of Antichrist's deceits, and to go even the right way to heaven. Amen, Jesu, for thy endless charity." The concession made in this extract should be remembered. It was not presumed by these itinerant instructors, that every beneficed man was necessarily a partisan of the practices which were the object of their censure. Leaving every such priest, if devoutly performing the duties, whether of prelacy or of the village pastor, to the guidance of his own conscience, they simply claimed for themselves the right of emulating the zeal of evangelists, the office of such being, in their view, less connected with temptation, and more adapted to the necessities of the times.

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VI.

Notice of  
William  
Thorp.

Among the persons who carried these devout sentiments into action, an important place is occupied by William Thorp. Within the parish of Wycliffe was a hamlet bearing the name of Thorp. In the fourteenth century it was the residence of a family, known by the same designation :<sup>7</sup> and there are circumstances which render it probable, that the confessor referred to was a native of that spot, and a member of its principal household. It is from himself we learn, that his parents were in circumstances which enabled them to expend considerable sums upon his education, with a view to his becoming a priest. But on reaching the years of manhood, he felt some grave scruples as to the propriety of assuming that office. His hesitation disappointed his friends, and so far excited their displeasure, that he had nearly resolved on quitting the home which his conscientious feeling had rendered a place of the greatest discomfort. Apprised of his half-formed purpose, his relatives were induced for a while to soften the severity of their manners toward him. The alternative, however, ere long, before him, was either to enter the church, or to wander a fugitive under the anathema of his parents. If a native of the parish of Wycliffe, the name and the doctrines of our reformer could hardly have been unknown to him. He submitted to his parents, that previous to forming his decision, he should be allowed to ascertain from certain who were considered wise priests, and of virtuous conversation, what the office of priesthood really imported. It is evident

<sup>7</sup> This appears from the inscriptions in the parish church, and from other local records.

that the men intended were the rector of Lutterworth, and his poor priests. The consent of his parents was obtained, who supplied him with money, and gave him their blessing, as he set forth on his journey. “And so,” he observes, “I went to those priests, whom I heard to be of best name, and of most holy living, and best learned, and most wise of heavenly wisdom; and so I communed with them unto the time that I perceived by their virtuous and continual occupations, that their honest and charitable works passed their fame which I had heard before of them.” After a considerable intercourse with these men, among whom Hereford and Ripington were then numbered, and particularly with Wycliffe himself, Thorp resolved on joining them in their labours. Through more than thirty winters, he continued to advocate their doctrines in the different parts of England, especially in the northern counties. At the close of that period, terror and persuasion were employed, with a view to induce a renunciation of the tenets which he had learned from the lips and from the writings of our reformer, but they were employed in vain. His examination before archbishop Arundel will be noticed in a subsequent chapter; but his sentiments with respect to preaching, and the general obligations of the priestly office, were common to the class of men with whom he considered it no small honour to be associated. These may be inserted in this place.

Accused by the primate of preaching without a licence, and of laying claim to a peculiar wisdom and sanctity, the prisoner replies: “By the

CHAP. VI. “ authority of God’s law, and also of saints and  
——— “ doctors, I am taught to believe that it is every  
“ priest’s office and duty to preach busily, freely,  
“ and truly the word of God. For, no doubt,  
“ every priest should propose first in his soul, to  
“ make known to the people the word of God,  
“ according to his knowledge and power, ever  
“ proving his words to be true by his virtuous  
“ works. For this intent, also, we suppose that  
“ bishops and other prelates of holy church  
“ should chiefly take and use their prelacy, and  
“ for the same cause bishops should give to priests  
“ their orders. For bishops should admit no  
“ man to the priesthood, except that he hath  
“ good will, and full purpose, and were well dis-  
“ posed, and well learned to preach. Wherefore,  
“ Sir, by the bidding of Christ, and by the  
“ example of his most holy living, and also by  
“ the living of his holy apostles and prophets, we  
“ are bound under full great pain, to exercise our-  
“ selves after our knowledge and power (as every  
“ priest is likewise charged of God) that we may  
“ fulfil duly the office of priesthood. We pre-  
“ sume not here of ourselves, for to be esteemed  
“ faithful disciples, and special followers of Christ,  
“ neither in our own reputation, nor in any other  
“ man’s. But, Sir, as I said to you before, we  
“ judge thus from the authority chiefly of God’s  
“ word, where it is the chief duty of every priest  
“ to employ himself faithfully in making known  
“ the law of God unto the people, and so to com-  
“ municate the commandments of God in charity,  
“ when, and to whom, that ever we may.” Such  
are the obligations which are said to devolve

imperiously on every priest, and desiring to be faithful disciples of Christ he writes, “ We pray  
“ this gracious Lord, for his holy name, that he  
“ would make us able to please him with devout  
“ prayers, and charitable priestly works, that we  
“ may obtain of him to follow him thankfully.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Fox, i. 687—708. Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Biography, i.

## CHAPTER VII.

NOTICE OF WYCLIFFE'S WRITINGS SUBSEQUENT TO HIS EXCLUSION FROM OXFORD—HIS TRIALOGUS—ON OBEDIENCE TO PRELATES—ON THE DECEITS OF SATAN AND OF HIS PRIESTS—ON THE DUTY OF LORDS—OF SERVANTS AND LORDS—OF GOOD PREACHING PRIESTS—ON THE FOUR DECEITS OF ANTICHRIST—ON THE PRAYERS OF GOOD MEN—OF CLERKS POSSESSIONERS.—RISE OF THE CRUSADE AGAINST THE AVIGNON POPE, AND ITS FAILURE.—WYCLIFFE RENEWS HIS CONTEST WITH THE MENDICANTS.—HIS TREATISE ON THE SENTENCE OF THE CURSE EXPOUNDED.—ON PRELATES AND OTHER SUBJECTS.—HIS SENTIMENTS ON WAR.—EXTRACTS FROM HIS SERMONS.—HIS SICKNESS AND DEATH.

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VII.

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THE reader must be left to judge of the foreboding which possessed the mind of Thorp and his brethren, as the arm of intolerance was raised to reduce them to silence or consign them to a prison. They would regard their own fate, as involved in the case of Hereford and his associates; and as rendered certain by the result of the prosecution instituted against Wycliffe. That result we have witnessed, and our attention is now called to the conduct of the reformer during the two last years of his life, which were spent wholly at Lutterworth. But while evidently sedulous in the performance of his parochial duties, his discourses, and his numerous compositions, produced at this period, demonstrate, that his zeal as a reformer had gathered intensity from the means which had been employed to extinguish it.

During the interval between his appearance before the papal delegates at Lambeth in 1378, and before the Oxford convocation in 1382, his

industry appears to have been almost exclusively directed to effect his translation of the scriptures. That great work achieved, he commenced his attack on the doctrine of transubstantiation; and expelled for this cause from the university, he addressed himself to the composition of a series of books, all intended to demonstrate the necessity of reform in the faith and manners of the church.

Among his works completed subsequent to his exclusion from Oxford, the first place must be allotted to his *Dialogus*. A modern historian, whose patient research has merited the confidence of the public, describes this treatise as a production of the period between 1372 and 1377. This is presumed to follow from the circumstance, that the writer refers to the first of those years as recent. The work, however, is replete with the author's objections to the received doctrine on the eucharist, embracing all the points of the controversy which arose with respect to that sacrament. Whatever the reformer's opinions were on that subject in 1377, it is evident, from the events of that year, and of the following, that they had not then attracted the notice of the clergy. But apart from these particulars, the date of this work is placed beyond doubt, by the fact, that the very passage in which the year 1372 is adverted to as recent, contains an allusion to the council and the earthquake which took place just ten years later.<sup>1</sup>

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Notice of  
Wycliffe's  
writings  
subsequent  
to his exclu-  
sion from  
Oxford. His  
*Dialogus*.

<sup>1</sup> It is surprising that this should have escaped Mr. Turner's notice. See *Hist.* v. 177. *Dialogus*, lib. iv. c. 36. The printed copies of this work which I have chiefly consulted, are that in the

British Museum, and one equally beautiful in the possession of the Rev. Thomas Russell, A. M. of Walworth. See chapter on the reformer's writings. Art. Trial.



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VII.

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It is not improbable that the reformer had delivered the larger portion of the *Triologus* from his divinity chair at different periods, previous to 1382; but when those parts were arranged for publication in the form of a treatise, many additions appear to have been made to them; and such as render the entire work a more complete exhibition of the mind of the author, than any other separate production. It is the same composition which is frequently referred to under the name of *Dialogues*; and toward the close of the work, it is remarked, that the form of a dialogue had been adopted, because usually more animated, and more attractive to the general reader, than that of dissertations. Truth, Falsehood, and Wisdom, are accordingly personified; and in discussing almost every point of controversy connected with religion in that age, the first proposes the question, the second urges objections, and the last performs the office of umpire. Through the whole, the attention is frequently called from the simpler views of morality and religion, to contemplate them through the medium of scholastic abstractions; a circumstance which may be regretted, but which, at the same time, serves to render the work a more faithful disclosure of the modes of thinking familiar to the devout and the educated among our ancestors, in the fourteenth century. It should be stated, also, that the native obscurity of many things contained in this book, is rendered still more perplexing by a style which partakes considerably of the barbarism of the age, and by numerous errors which appear to have been those of transcribers or of the press. Yet,

passing over these defects, and the obsolete character of the learning which it frequently displays; the lucid statements of the most important doctrines, which are frequently occurring in the *Triologus*, confer upon it a value to which no other production of the same period is entitled.<sup>2</sup>

The work consists of four books, and these are subdivided into numerous chapters. Nearly the whole of the first book is occupied in discussing a series of questions relating to the existence and perfections of the Deity. All excellencies that may possibly exist, are considered as having their place in the divine nature; and while those diffused over creation proceed alone from him, every thing in man opposed to the nature of God, considered in his spiritual attributes, is affirmed to be depravity, and to be founded in weakness and error. The doctrine of the Trinity is of course discussed, and some attention is bestowed on certain natural appearances which were supposed to illustrate that mysterious truth. After some remarks on the theories of Plato and Aristotle respecting ideas, the writer concludes with a censure on the papal authority—as by sanctioning the doctrine which declared the sacred host to be an accident without a subject, it had affirmed that to be true, which no mind may possibly comprehend. In a previous conversation relating to the

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Turner observes, "Its attractive merit was, that it combined the new opinions with the scholastic style of thinking and deduction. It was not the mere illiterate reformer, teaching novelties, whom the man of education disdained and derided ;

"it was the respected academician, reasoning with the ideas of the reformer."—Hist. v. 177. Lenfant discovered a copy of this work in the library of the university of Frankfurt on the Oder. Council of Constance, i. 532.

CHAP. VII. mystery of the Trinity, the reformer had observed:  
— “ Some men are so strangely mistaken in judging  
“ on this subject, as to suppose that the light of  
“ faith is contrary to that of nature ; and accord-  
“ ingly, that what may seem impossible to the  
“ latter, should be implicitly received upon the  
“ testimony of the former. But the truth is, men  
“ call their own darkness the light of nature, and  
“ hence weakly suppose that the light of reason  
“ and of scripture are at variance with each other.”  
Thus also, in concluding the above observation on  
the eucharist, it is remarked, that “ God teaches  
“ us the truth, and nothing but the truth, and  
“ what may be known by us to be such.” This  
doctrine is inculcated for the immediate purpose  
of exposing the necessary falsehood of transub-  
stantiation ; but it is also urged in this, and in  
other instances, to secure to the reason of man its  
due influence with respect to religious faith in  
general ; and the ingenuity of the writer is suc-  
cessfully employed, to vindicate his assent to the  
doctrine of the Trinity, while rejecting the dog-  
mas which had corrupted the eucharist.

A large portion of the second book is devoted to  
the speculations of the day on the elements and  
revolutions of the visible universe ; and as a whole,  
it is chiefly remarkable as opposing the mate-  
rialism of Averroes respecting the human soul : as  
stating the old series of philosophical arguments  
in proof of the soul’s immortality : as containing  
the doctrine of the reformer on predestination and  
grace : and as treating the pretensions of the  
astrologer with contempt, and the whole science  
of natural philosophy as yet in its infancy. The

two last conclusions are truths of which men are now fully aware, but which some of the most enlightened scholars in the fourteenth century would have been slow to acknowledge. CHAP.  
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The third book relates more immediately to moral and theological opinions. The power to act virtuously and devoutly, wherever possessed, is said to be derived from the grace of God ; and hence it is inferred, that no excellence of mind or conduct can be justly regarded as meriting eternal life. Faith is defined as an assent of the reason, referring exclusively to the truth, and to things unseen ; as forming the basis of all christian enjoyment ; and as that principle, the declension of which must necessarily precede each gradation in apostacy. The love of God is beautifully inculcated as the only secure foundation of morals, and of social happiness. He is described as in all things worthy of supreme affection ; and the love of his nature is declared to be inseparable from that of his laws, which are truly the expression of his character, the revelation of himself. Hence, philanthropy, and whatever is included in faith, hope, or charity, is viewed as comprehended in what the laws of the Creator require. The portions of this book which relate to the evil of sin ; to the Saviour's incarnation and sacrifice, as necessary to procure its remission ; to the excellencies of the Redeemer's character ; and to the doctrines of grace ; are distinguished from passages referring to the same matters, and inserted in some other pages of this work, only as being more strongly marked by the scholastic method of treating them—a peculiarity which would not add to their attrac-

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tion with a modern reader. In the seventh and eighth chapters the disciples of Pelagius, and those who only partially adopt his system, are assailed as “weak simonists,” who conceive that grace is to be bought or sold as an article of merchandise; and the writer states his own doctrine respecting the necessity of future events, in strong, and somewhat perplexing language. But the thirtieth and the thirty-first chapters are the most important in the series. In these, the authority of the church, the invocation of saints, and many other errors are exposed; and the sufficiency of the scriptures, and of the aids of the One Mediator, together with some other articles of protestant doctrine, are boldly taught.

It is, however, in the last book of the *Triologus*, that the peculiar doctrines of its author become most conspicuous; and to this his opponents directed their chief attention. While considering what are called the seven sacraments, as possessing different measures of importance, and all as more or less disfigured by human inventions, the validity of each is still left unquestioned. The doctrine of the eucharist is treated precisely as in his *Wicket*, and *Confessions*. In its nature, it is verily bread, sacramentally, it is the body of Christ; and much powerful reasoning is employed, to expose the gross impossibilities inseparable from the tenet of transubstantiation. In the sanction conferred on this dogma by the pontiffs, the writer perceives the fulfilment of the prophet Daniel’s prediction, concerning the desolation which should profane the holy place. “For what,” it is inquired, “can

“ form a more odious desolation, than to see upon  
“ the christian altar, by the appointment of Anti-  
“ christ, a number of consecrated hosts, all ex-  
“ posed to the adoration of the people, though  
“ naturally they are merely bread, and the  
“ body of Christ only in figure? Nor is it at  
“ all to the purpose to say, that they do not  
“ worship the host, but that they reverence it for  
“ the sake of the body of Christ which is in it:  
“ for the uncreated Trinity is a nobler object  
“ than the mere body and blood of Christ; and  
“ as there is no creature wherein the Trinity is  
“ not, all creatures should for the same reason be  
“ adored.” Baptism he describes as removing  
the stain of original sin; and it is even asserted,  
that no man may be saved while refusing to submit  
to it. Confirmation is also viewed as placing the  
soul under the immediate influences of the Holy  
Spirit; and ordination, as far as it was connected  
with the appointment of priests and deacons, is  
viewed as of divine origin; but the application  
of that rite to men, distinguished by other names,  
or sustaining other offices, is described as an in-  
novation, and as of very doubtful propriety. His  
subsequent remarks on the sacramental services  
have nothing peculiar in them. They are con-  
nected, however, as usual, with complaints re-  
specting the vices of the mendicants, and the  
worldliness of the secular clergy; and it is re-  
peatedly affirmed to be an act of weakness, to  
concede to the pontiffs that secular or spiri-  
tual supremacy which they had so long claimed.  
In the concluding chapters, the writer treats of  
death, the resurrection, the judgment, and the

CHAP. character of the opposite allotments awaiting the  
 VII. human race after the dissolution of all things. In this part of the work, amid much that is speculative, there is much that is distinguished by its seriousness and devotion.<sup>3</sup>

His treatise  
 "On Obe-  
 dience to  
 Prelates,"

Among the reformer's manuscripts still extant, are many pieces which were evidently produced about the same period with the work now described. His treatise intitled "On Obedience to "Prelates,"<sup>4</sup> was written subsequent to the spring of 1382. It commences with stating, that

<sup>3</sup> The following passage has been added, to show the consciousness of danger with which the writer pursued his plans as a reformer. We shall meet with many such in his other works relating to the same period. "As all ought to be the soldiers of Christ, it is evident how many are condemned by their sloth, who allow the fear of losing temporal benefits, or of worldly friendships, or of the welfare of the body, to make them unfaithful to God's cause, or averse to stand manfully for it, even to death, if necessary. Modern hypocrites say, through the device of Satan, that it is not necessary now to suffer martyrdom, as it was in the primitive church, because now, all or the greater part of living men are believers, and that there are now no tyrants to put christians to death. This excuse comes of Satan; for, if the faithful now would stand firm for the law of Christ, and as his soldiers endure bravely any sufferings, they might tell the pope, the cardinals, the bishops, and other prelates, how, departing from the faith of the gospel, they minister improperly to God, and commit perilous injury against his people."—Trial. The conduct thus adverted to, as leading to martyrdom, will be remembered as that

which the reformer was steadily pursuing. Again, he powerfully adds, "Visit not pagans to convert them by martyrdom, but rather preach constantly the law of Christ, even to the princely prelates; and if we persevere in faith and patience, martyrdom will come with sufficient speed."—Ibid. Turner. Hist. v. 181, 182. For some further notices of this work, see the chapter on the opinions of Wycliffe, and that on his writings.

Mr. Lewis's volume contains no information as to the date, or the general contents of the Trialogus. The same may be said of the series of treatises to be noticed in this chapter, nearly twenty in number. Some judgment may have been formed of several of these productions, from the brief extracts which have been printed from them; the rest have been known only by their titles. Note to the second edition.

<sup>4</sup> MS. C. C. C. Cambridge. Trinity College, Dublin, class C. tab. 3. No. 12. For the passages proving the date of this, and several following works, see Vol. I. Chap. v. note 8. This work, On Obedience to Prelates, is a different work from that On Prelates, but the date of both is determined by their reference to the same circumstances, especially to the jurisdiction of the



“ prelates slander poor priests, and other christian  
 “ men, saying that they will not obey their sove- CHAP.  
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 “ reign, nor fear the curse, nor dread, nor keep  
 “ the law, but despise all things which are against  
 “ their liking; and that they ought in consequence  
 “ to be destroyed, lest they prove the destruction  
 “ of holy church, and of Christendom.” In his  
 attempt to refute this calumny, and to counteract  
 the malignant purposes which it was meant to  
 accomplish, he avows his readiness, and that of  
 his followers, to honour the prelates, and to obey  
 their injunctions so long as their doctrine and  
 their life should be found conformable to the les-  
 sons of scripture. To demand more than this, it  
 is argued, must be to require a degree of submis-  
 sion, which neither the apostles nor the Lord  
 himself exacted, though possessing the gifts of  
 inspiration and miracles, and exhibiting a life of  
 unexampled devotion. If the instruction of the  
 word of God, and the nature of the jurisdiction  
 exercised by the prelates, be found opposed to  
 each other, reason and piety are said to suggest,  
 that the authority of the greater should be pre-  
 ferred to that of the less. Let bishops emulate  
 the zeal of apostles, and the homage of the priest-  
 hood, and of the people, will not be wanting.  
 And let the same regard for the will of the supreme  
 Lord, as it is contained in the scriptures, regulate  
 their application of spiritual censures; or be ob-  
 servable in the laws of any christian community;  
 and true men will be the last to despise the one

prelates, as infringed by the labours  
 of the reformer's “ poor priests,” and  
 to the contentions and persecutions

which followed. Note to the second  
 edition.

CHAP. or the other. But modern prelates, it is asserted,  
 VII. are too frequently the enemies of all piety; and their ceaseless efforts to assimilate the maxims of the gospel to their own worldly desires, is declared to be the source to which nearly every existing corruption should be traced. The vigour with which these topics are discussed, will appear from extracts to be inserted in the next chapter. It is thus the writer concludes the defence of himself and his disciples: "Let worldly prelates, "then, cease to slander poor priests, saying, "that they will not obey their sovereigns, nor "dread the curse, but despise the law; for in "all these three they are clear before God and "man, if right, and reason, and charity be well "sought."

His tract on  
 the Deceits  
 of Satan and  
 of his  
 Priests.

Another composition, bearing upon the same evils, is described by its author as shewing "how "Satan, and his priests, and his feigned religious, "study by their cursed heresies to destroy all "good living, and to maintain all manner of "sin."<sup>5</sup> The allusions in this tract to the controversy respecting the translating of the scriptures into the vulgar tongue, and to the existing persecutions, determine its date. The writer complains indignantly of the efforts which were made to diminish the authority of holy writ, and to raise man's interpretation of its meaning into the place that should be peculiar to the volume itself. This policy he defines as "a feigning to "be wiser than God." He also censures the artifices by which the religious were frequently

<sup>5</sup> MS. C. C. C. Cambridge.

known to induce the young to adopt the vows of their fraternities; and to the charge of malevolence, as preferred by the clergy while suffering under his rebuke, it is replied, that if such reproofs are inconsistent with charity, the life of Christ, of his apostles, and of the prophets who preceded them, must form a dangerous example to the church. “Almighty God,” he observes, “who is full of charity, commandeth the prophet Isaiah, to cry, and cease not, and to shew to the people their great sins. The sin of the commons is great, the sin of lords, of mighty men, and of wise men is more; but the sin of prelates is most of all, and most blindeth the people. True men are bound, therefore, by God’s command, to cry most against the sins of prelates, since it is in itself the most, and harmeth most the people.” It was particularly objected, that the censures adverted to were generally uttered in the absence of the parties concerned. But it is remarked of these same parties, that “Antichrist maketh them so mighty, that in their presence no man dare speak against their open sins, unless he would be dead anon.” It is accordingly suggested, that to limit freedom of speech to such occasions, was to proscribe it entirely. The writer concludes by devoutly praying, that God himself would divest the clerks of Antichrist of their power to impede the progress of his truth; and that “he would strengthen all manner of men to maintain the truth of holy writ, and to destroy all falsehood, and openly to oppose, both in word and deed, all hypocrisy, and heresy, and covetousness, in all prelates

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CHAP. VII. “and priests: for thus shall good life and truth,  
 ——— “and peace, and charity, reign among christian  
 “men! Jesus Christ! for thine endless mercy,  
 “grant us this! Amen.”

On the duty  
 of lords.

Connected with this reproof of the temper and maxims of the clergy, was a renewed appeal to the secular authorities, stating three “skills,” or reasons, which would induce lords “to constrain clerks to live in meekness, wilful poverty, and discreet penance, and ghostly travail.”<sup>6</sup> The first argument employed is deduced from those parts of scripture which were understood as threatening magistrates who should neglect this momentous duty with serious penalties. The second is deduced from the happiness which must be diffused, by extending the influence of an enlightened piety. The last is founded on the political benefits which must result from a correction of religious abuses. From this spirited production, some extracts will also be given in the chapter devoted to the fuller statement of the reformer’s opinions.

“Of Ser-  
 vants and  
 Lords.”

In aid of these appeals to the magistrate, Wycliffe also published his treatise, intitled, “Of Servants and Lords, how each should keep his degree.”<sup>7</sup> In this work, the author asserts the legitimate authority of the civil power; and largely quotes from the New Testament scriptures, to demonstrate that the principles which induce some devout men to discard the guidance of a vicious clergy in religion, are not such as to interfere with any branch of their duty as subjects

<sup>6</sup> MS. C. C. C. Cambridge.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. See for the date of this MS. Vol. I. Chap. v. note 8.

of the sovereign. To the evils of bad government, the writer shows himself to be keenly sensible; but while reproving vice with the same freedom, whether found in lords or churchmen, his protest is entered against the artifice of applying to the magistrate the reasonings which he had employed merely to invalidate the false pretensions of the priest. The manner in which the reformer distinguished between the claims of the two authorities, will presently invite our attention. It will be sufficient here to remark of this production, that there is no seed of anarchy to be extracted from it. It is rather fraught with every scriptural element of social and religious obligation.

It was at this period, also, that Wycliffe finished a work on the subject "Of Good Preaching Priests."<sup>s</sup> Its design was to afford a farther developement of the principles embraced by the reformer's poor priests. Their first object is said to be, "that the law of God may be steadily known, taught, maintained, and magnified; secondly, that great and open sin, which reigneth in divers states, be destroyed, and also the heresy and hypocrisy of Antichrist and of his followers; thirdly, that very peace and prosperity, and burning charity, be increased in Christendom, and particularly in the realm of England, for to bring men readily to the bliss of heaven." In a series of articles, the writer then proceeds to demonstrate the necessity of the effort made by these reformers; censures loudly the

"Of Good  
Preaching  
Priests."

<sup>s</sup> MS. C. C. C. Cambridge. See also Vol. I. Chap. v. note 8, for the points which determine the date of this work.

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imprisonment of men before openly convicted of offence; and condemning every sort of secret process against an accused party, he demands for each man, as an unalienable right, the substance of that security from the arbitrary temper of the magistrate, and of the prelates, which has since become the chartered inheritance, and the real possession of Englishmen.

On the four  
deceits of  
Antichrist.

The opponents of Wycliffe were fully aware, that the proficiency of his disciples as preachers, was a circumstance from which they derived the principal share of their influence; and it would be deemed important that the authority employed to silence them, should be accompanied by some shew of reasoning. It is accordingly the object of one of the reformer's pieces, completed about this time, to expose, "four deceits by which Antichrist, and his clerks, would prevent true priests from preaching Christ's gospel."<sup>2</sup> The first objection to this favourite occupation of the poor priests, is, that "it maketh dissension and enmity." But to this it is replied, that there is a kind of peace which the Author of the gospel came not to establish; that the only repose which may be innocently left unbroken, is that which is founded on just principles, and heavenly affections; and that whatever hostility may be excited, by the effort to place the minds of men in subjection to such principles and such affections, should be encountered without fear. If the first objection to the zeal of the new preachers be deemed weak, the second must be considered as much more so. Many, it is affirmed, will perish, though

<sup>2</sup> MS. C.C.C. Cambridge.

they hear the gospel; and perish the more unhappily, “because they hear God’s word, and do “not thereafter.” But in reply, it is proved to be a doctrine of scripture, that the more the gospel is preached, the fewer men will be lost; and that where men really fail to embrace the faith of Christ, many a partial renunciation of sin, and many a real though imperfect virtue, may be the result of listening to its ministry; and such results are viewed as serving to diminish the sufferings even of the finally impenitent. “But “wherever a gathering of people is,” it is remarked, “there is commonly some good men, “and for them principally men preach God’s “word.” Nor was this antinomian tenet, as opposed to preaching, considered merely with respect to the impenitent, but also as referring to the elect. “Good men,” it was asserted, “shall be “saved, though there be no preaching; for as “God saith it, they may not perish.” It is thus, that this objection is refuted. “Here true men “say, that as God hath ordained good men to “bliss, so he hath ordained them to come to bliss “by the preaching, and by the keeping of his “word. So that even as they must need come to “bliss, they must needs hear and keep God’s “commandments. And herein to them serveth “preaching.” Whatever of necessity there may be in the end, was thus extended to the means. The fourth deceit employed to degrade the office of preaching, is said to be “that men should “cease from preaching, and give themselves to “holy prayers and contemplation, for that helpeth “christian men more, and is better.” But it is



CHAP. immediately added, " True men say boldly, that  
 VII. " true preaching is better than praying by mouth,  
 " even though it come from the heart, and with  
 " pure devotion. The people, too, it edifieth  
 " more. And therefore Christ especially com-  
 " mandeth his apostles and disciples to preach the  
 " gospel, and not to close themselves in cloisters  
 " nor churches, nor in caves to pray thus. There-  
 " fore, Paul saith, woe is me, if I preach not the  
 " gospel. Devout prayer of men of good life, is  
 " good, in certain times ; but it is against charity  
 " for priests to pray evermore, and at no time to  
 " preach ; since Christ chargeth priests more to  
 " preach the gospel, than to say mass and matins."

On the  
 prayers of  
 good men.

It was thus that the reformer continued to defend the practice of his clerical disciples. The reasoning with which the above treatise concludes, was also much extended in a work which proposed to shew, " how the prayer of good men " helpeth much, and prayer of sinful men dis- " pleaseth God, and harmeth themselves, and " other men."<sup>10</sup> In this piece, which breathes a spirit of the purest devotion, the promises and the examples of scripture are largely cited, to demonstrate the excellence and the efficacy of prayer. The same book is appealed to, as teaching no less decisively the vanity of the most costly offerings that may be presented by the hypocrite, the vicious, or the formalist. It is deplored, as among the most foreboding circumstances of the times, that men are so far disposed to confide in the prayers of such intercessors ; and thus to yield to a delusion, which not only tended

<sup>10</sup> MS. C, C. C. Cambridge.

to impoverish them in this world, but to involve them in the ruin of the next.

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Indeed, there is scarcely a class of men, or a species of religious error, of which the writings of Wycliffe, at this period, may not be found to treat, and in a manner which anticipates almost every fact in our subsequent improvement as a nation. Thus in one of his productions, the manner in which he had refuted the errors opposed to the office of preaching, is extended to a series of similar misconceptions with respect to religion in general. It is remarked, for instance, that by the phrase "holy church," men commonly understand a sort of clerical parliament; by the term "religious," they mean hordes of vagrant friars, or the useless inmates of a cloister; by the expression, "the law of the church," they intend the decrees of popes and councils, not the decisions of holy writ; to yield "obedience," was not to submit to what the conscience had recognised as the will of God, but to bow to what presumption had imposed upon the credulous; and by "sin," was generally meant some venial offence, the guilt of which "might be washed away with a paternoster, with holy water, a pardon, a bishop's blessing, and in many other light ways." Another treatise commences with the assertion, that nearly all the evils of the land arose from the delinquencies "of false confessors, false merchants, and false men of law;" and the object of the writer is to prove the truth of this assertion. The confessors chiefly intended are the mendicants, for they had nearly engrossed that function to themselves; the merchants, are

CHAP. the conductors of our infant commerce, but who,  
 VII. it would seem, had already begun to diffuse the evils of their traffic along with his benefits; and the lawyers adverted to, are principally those entrusted with the power of the spiritual courts.

"Of Clerks  
 Possession-  
 ers."

But at this period it was, in a treatise called "Of Clerks Possessioners,"<sup>11</sup> that the reformer mainly attempted his exposure of the irreligion, which, in his view, had resulted to so great a degree, from the opulence, and the secular jurisdiction of the clergy. This work consists of forty chapters, and from its notices of the wrongs inflicted on certain preachers of the gospel, and also of some other topics of controversy, its date could not have been earlier than 1382, nor later than the year following. Each chapter is devoted to an investigation of some feature in the general corruption of the church. One leading subject of complaint is, that the ample revenues which are known to be "poor men's goods," rather than the property of the clergy, should be so commonly spent by that order in luxurious living, and in carelessness of the wants which often oppressed the members of their flock. It is deplored, also, that while the wealth of ecclesiastics served thus to ensnare them to modes of life which were unbecoming their vocation, the nature of their jurisdiction, and of the offices which they were frequently induced to hold, should be such as of necessity to divert their attention, in a still greater degree, from spiritual things. It is moreover stated that the affluence, and the secular power of the clergy, had every where become the

<sup>11</sup> MS. C. C. C. Cambridge. See Vol. I. Chap. v. note 8.

most potent engines of oppression—crushing every man who dared attempt a separation between the doctrines of christianity, and the dreams of superstition. If the christian priesthood be ever again employed “in studying and teaching of “holy writ, in devotion and prayer, in thinking, “and heavenly sweetness,” the preliminary steps, it is contended, must be to diminish the force of temptation, by a reduction of their revenue, and by releasing them from the bonds of secular employment. Neither Christ, nor his apostles, could be induced to unite the office of the secular and the spiritual steward; and hence, it is argued, that unless the churchmen of the age should prove themselves to be superior in capacity to the Head of the church, and to the men who were witnesses of his resurrection, the effect of the existing order of things must be pernicious. His prayer in conclusion is, that “Almighty God “would stir up his priests, lords, and commons, “to detect the hypocrisy, heresy, and treason of “Antichrist’s worldly clerks; and to know, and “maintain the rightful ordinance of God, and the “profit and freedom of the gospel.”

But while these, and similar compositions,—all certainly produced about this period, bespoke the growing zeal with which the rector of Lutterworth continued to prosecute the work of reform, a test was applied to the popular feeling in England, which discovered that his doctrines, though widely disseminated, had hitherto acquired but a limited ascendancy over the mind of his countrymen. The reader will remember the schism which at this moment divided the papacy. France

Rise of the  
crusade  
against the  
Avignon  
pope.

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acknowledged the authority of Clement, who had fixed his residence at Avignon: and England was at the head of that portion of Christendom, which recognised the claims of Urban.<sup>12</sup> These pontiffs had employed their spiritual weapons against each other, and against their respective partisans, with the most boisterous freedom: but the last arrow, on either side, had been spent in vain. It was now resolved to ascertain the effect of an alliance between the elements of this world and the terrors of the next. To produce a military crusade against the Avignon pontiff and his adherents, every kind of indulgence which had been granted for the purpose of propelling the western nations toward the holy sepulchre was resorted to. As the hostilities thus devised, were to be considered as the effort of the church, it was the determination of the pope to reserve the principal command to an ecclesiastic; and this doubtful honour was conferred on Spencer, bishop of Norwich, a prelate who had already given decisive evidence of his passion for military adventure. In 1377,<sup>13</sup> an incident occurred, which betrayed his contempt of the civil power, as compared with that of his own order; but his vanity proved so offensive to the populace of the town in which it was thought convenient to display it, that his life became endangered. His rough treatment, in that instance, may have increased his christian abhorrence of that class of society, which he had scornfully described as the ribald multitude; for during the insurrection of

<sup>12</sup> See chap. i. The story of this enterprise is minutely and amusingly

told by Froissart. Vol. vi. c. 51—65.

<sup>13</sup> Fox, Acts, &c.

the commons in 1382, while the government was strangely inactive, Spencer was at the head of his vassals, and the tranquillity of his diocese is attributed to his vigilance. His name, also, occurs in the list of the prelates who sat in judgment on Wycliffe at Oxford; and his memorable controversy with Epringham, who was a disciple of our reformer and a magistrate of Norwich, has placed his hatred of the Lollards beyond dispute.<sup>14</sup> The bull with which he was entrusted, vested him with extraordinary powers. The laity adhering to the antipope, and all who should in any manner favour them, were not only sentenced to lose every worldly office and possession, but to be slain with the sword. With respect to the clergy who had become parties to the schism, the bishop was instructed to exert his whole power with a view to deprive them of every cure, honour, and emolument; and it was left to his discretion, to insist on the presence of the most privileged members of the English hierarchy, in the camp of the crusaders. Against all who should presume to oppose the discharge of this commission, though possessing regal dignity, the prelate was to launch the anathemas of the church; while, to such as should enlist themselves in aid of this sacred enterprise, though dying before the struggle should commence, and to such as should contribute the smallest portion of their property with the same view, the remission of all trespasses was awarded, together with every immunity conceded to such “as go to fight for the holy land.”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Wals. Hist. ubi supra.<sup>15</sup> Fox, i. 582, 583.

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To render this measure as little objectionable as possible to the English court and parliament, it was suggested by the pontiff, that to meet its expenses, a tenth should be raised from the revenues of the clergy; and that every thing obtained from the laity should be strictly voluntary, and bear the name of alms. Such, however, was the zeal of Urban, that more than thirty bulls were dispatched to England on this subject; and the conduct of the English prelates, in rendering these documents the ground of inflammatory appeals from the pulpit, supplied an example which the inferior clergy would not be slow to imitate.<sup>16</sup> “All who should die at this time,” observes Froissart, “and who had given their money, were “absolved from every fault, and by the tenure of “the bull, happy were they who could now die, “in order to obtain so noble an absolution.” It was the arrangement of the pope, that France and Spain should be invaded at the same moment; the expedition against the latter kingdom being entrusted to the duke of Lancaster, in virtue of his claim as king of Castile, and perhaps, with the hope of detaching him more completely from the rank of the reformers. Froissart assures us, that the sums raised by these expedients were considered sufficient for both enterprises; but while smiling at the easy faith of the good people of England, he states it as well known, that the nobles of this land held the absolutions of the church in so little esteem, that with them, unless offers of money were made, all other inducements would be useless. “Men at arms,” he adds,

<sup>16</sup> Froissart.



“ cannot live on pardons, nor do they pay much  
“ attention to them, except at the point of death.”

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If Lancaster was ever really interested in the part allotted to him, he soon found himself obliged to abandon it. France was the nearer, and the rival kingdom; and though to invade it under the command of a churchman might occur as a difficulty, yet that churchman was a man of family, and the representative of the head of Christendom. Before leaving England, Spencer and his followers were sworn to limit their hostilities to the adherents of the antipope, and on the twenty-third of April, 1383, they disembarked at Calais. Some weeks were there passed in waiting the arrival of Sir William Beauchamp, whose presence, with some reinforcements, had been promised by the English monarch. But that knight failed to make his appearance: the bishop became impatient; and it was resolved to make an excursion into Flanders—a country then subject to the power of France. Sir Hugh Calverly, who appears to be the only man engaged in this undertaking without relinquishing the guidance of common sense, objected seriously to the proposed movement—insisting that the king's instructions respecting Sir William Beauchamp ought not to be violated; and moreover, that the earl of Flanders, and his subjects, were believed to be good Urbanists. To these obstacles, the bishop opposed a torrent of angry and contemptuous declamation. The experienced soldier was provoked, and avowed himself prepared to execute the instructions of his superior, however perilous, or however much he might question their justice or their policy.

CHAP. The town of Gravelines was first assailed. It  
VII.  
— was inhabited principally by fishermen, possessed but the feeblest means of defence, and was farther exposed to all the disadvantages of a surprise. The followers of the bishop were scrupulous in executing his commands, and whether exasperated by the resistance which he had encountered, or wishing to operate by the agency of terror, the innocent inhabitants were slaughtered with an atrocity so unsparing, that, according to Walsingham, not an infant remained alive. The earl of Flanders sent his messengers to complain of this wanton aggression. But the devout priest replied, with an oath, that the invaded territory had been conquered by the French; and that the effort of the English to wrest it from the grasp of a power with which they were at war, was an act which required no explanation. From Gravelines, the crusaders proceeded to Dunkirk, where a struggle ensued, in which several hundreds of the English, and nearly ten thousand of the Flemings are said to have perished. The capture of that town was soon followed by the possession of others, where the inhabitants hoped to protect themselves from the ferocity of the victors by the show of submission. Spencer, it will be supposed, was elated beyond measure by these triumphs. So much was this the case, that he boasted of his readiness to measure his strength with that of the king of France, and of the duke of Burgundy, who had united their forces, and were proceeding by slow marches to strip him of his spoil. On their approach, his acquisitions fell from his grasp,

with a rapidity equal to that with which they had been secured. Any rash man, in the same circumstances, might have made them; and rash men only, could for a moment have regarded them as permanent. His escape to England was among the fortunate incidents of his life: but the censure and contempt with which he was every where assailed on his return, must have been one of the severest trials that his vain and irritable spirit could have had to sustain.<sup>17</sup>

The reader will remember, that the proceedings against Wycliffe before the Oxford convocation in 1382, derived much of their severity from the hatred of the mendicants. Stern as the discussions had often been betwixt the religious orders, and the secular clergy, their animosities were for a while suspended, that the parties regarded as hostile to both might be at once overpowered. The ebullition of fanaticism described above, took place in 1383, and in giving it existence, the officious zeal of the new orders was every where prominent. The reformer had no sooner returned to Lutterworth, than he published an extended commentary on the text, "Beware of the leaven of the pharisees, which is hypocrisy."<sup>18</sup> The design of this address was to identify the followers of St. Francis and of St. Dominic, in the existing system, with the pharisees of Judea at the period of the advent. Both

Wycliffe  
renews his  
contest with  
the mendi-  
cants.

<sup>17</sup> Froissart. Wals. The companions of Spencer shared in his disgrace. Robert de Foulmer, a clergyman, and treasurer to the bishop of Norwich, was imprisoned, and 5000 golden francs levied on his goods. A similar punishment was also awarded to Sir

W. Elmham, Sir W. Farndon, Sir Thomas Trivet, and Robert Fitzrauf. This sentence, however, which was announced on the 6th of March, was rescinded on the 14th of May. Rymer, ann. 1384.

<sup>18</sup> MS. C.C.C. Cambridge.

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parties are minutely described, and they are said to rival each other in the sanctity of their pretensions, and in the character and multitude of their offences. But as the vices of the friars were rendered still more dark by the veil of their extraordinary pretension to piety, their hypocrisy is declared to be “the most accursed and poisonous of all.” It is affirmed also, that “if by subtlety, by hypocrisy, and by help from the laws of Antichrist, they hinder curates and poor priests from teaching men the law of God, for fear lest their hypocrisy be perceived, and their winning and worldly fame be laid low,—they are accursed man-slayers, and the cause of destruction to all the souls that perish from default in knowing and keeping the commandments of God. And if they preach principally for worldly gain and vain-glory, and so preach themselves to be praised of men, and not simply and plainly the gospel of Christ, for his glory, and the gaining of men’s souls, they deal unfaithfully with the word of God, as Paul saith.”<sup>19</sup> He afterward adverts to the mendi-

<sup>19</sup> The following portrait from the *Sompnoure’s Tale*, in Chaucer, may be worthy of a place here, from its strict agreement with Wycliffe’s notices of the same order:

“Lordings! there is in Yorkshire, as  
I gesse,  
A marsh contree ycalled Holdernesse,  
In which ther went a limitour aboute,  
To preche — and, eke, to beg, it is no  
doubte.  
And so befell, that on a day this frere,  
Had preched at a chirche in his manere,

And specially, aboven every thing  
Excited he the people in his preching  
To trentalls, and to yeve, for Goddes  
sake,  
Wherwith men mighten holy houses  
make,  
Ther as divine service is honoured,—  
Not ther as it is wasted and devoured;  
Ne ther it nedeth not for to be yeven  
As to possessioners, that morven leven  
(Thanked be God) in well and abundance  
‘Trentalls,’ said he, ‘deliveren fro  
penance

cants as parties to the existing schism in the papacy, and to each party as declaring their opponents to be "heretics out of belief." His own assertion is, that "both are indeed out of belief;" and that they "are bringing all other men out of belief." Nor is the reformer less decisive, when referring to the duties of the men who profess to deplore these and similar evils. He complains of "the cowardice of Christ's disciples, if they spare from fear of bodily pain or death, to tell openly the truth of God's law. And therefore," he observes, "telleth Christ often to his disciples, that they should fear God above all, and fear nothing else. Truly, saith

'Hir freundes soules as wel olde as yonge.

'Ye, whan that they ben hastily ysonge,  
'(Not for to hold a preest jolif and gay;

'He singeth not but o masse on a day;)

'Delivereth out, quod he, anon, the soules.

'Ful hard it is, with fleshhook, or with oules,

'To ben yelawed; or to bren, or bake,

'Now spede you hastily for Cristes sake.'

And whan this frere had said all his entent,

With 'qui cum patre' forth his way he went.

Whan folk in chirche had yeve him what hem lest,

He went his way, no lenger wold he rest.

With scrippe, and tipped staf, ytucked lie:

In every hous he gan to pore and prie,  
And begged mele and chese, or elles corn,

His felaw had a staf tipped with horn,  
A pair of tables all of ivory,

And a pointel ypolished fetisly,—

And wrote alway the names, as he stood,

Of alle folk that yave hem any good,

Askanne that he wolde for hem preye,  
'Yeve us a bushel whete, or malt, or reye,

'A Goddes kichel, or a trippe of chese;

'Or elles what you list, we may not chese

'A Goddes halpenny, or a masse peny,

'Or yeve us of your braun, if he have any,

'A dagon of your blanket, leve dame!

'Our suster dere! (lo, here I write your name,)

'Bacon or beef, or swiche thing as ye find.'

A sturdy harlot went hem, ay, behind,  
That was her hostes man, and bare a sakke,

And what men gave hem laid it on his bakke,

And, whan that he was out at dore,—anon

He planed away the names everich on,  
That he before had written in his tables,

He served him with nifles and with fables."

CHAP. VII. “ Christ, ‘ I will forewarn you whom you shall  
 “ fear, fear not those who can destroy the body,  
 “ and no more, but fear him who can destroy  
 “ both body and soul in hell, yea I say, fear ye  
 “ him.’ Here Christ would that men should fear  
 “ nothing, chiefly, but God, and the offending of  
 “ him. For if men fear bodily pain and death,  
 “ and therefore cease to tell openly the truth,  
 “ they are with this unable to regain the bliss of  
 “ heaven. But if they say openly and steadily  
 “ the truth of God, nothing may harm them, so  
 “ they keep patience and charity.” It was to  
 comfort his disciples in suffering, and especially  
 in the season of persecution, that the Saviour re-  
 minded them of the Father’s care as extending  
 to the falling sparrow, and to the hairs of their  
 head ; “ for thus should they learn to believe that  
 “ nothing comes without his knowledge and his  
 “ ordaining, and that it is all for the best.” He is  
 also said to “ make his servants ready to die for  
 “ his law by hope of reward, when he saith thus,  
 “ ‘ each who shall acknowledge me before men,  
 “ shall the Son of man acknowledge before the  
 “ angels.’ ”

The date of this production is certain, from its allusion to the papal schism, and to the controversy respecting the eucharist.<sup>20</sup> A few months only had elapsed from the time of its publication, when the instructions of Urban, with a view to destroy the power of his rival, called the mendicant orders into new activity and importance. It was their labour and artifice, which did most

<sup>20</sup> This is the tract on which the notice by archbishop Usher, already adverted to, appears. See Vol. i. 304, 305.

toward involving the states of Christendom, in all the calamities of a religious war. Their ardour to crowd the ranks of the crusaders, roused the indignation of the rector of Lutterworth, and during Spencer's adventure in Flanders, produced his treatise intitled, "Objections to Freres," a work in which he has concentrated his objections to the character and opinions of that class of men.<sup>21</sup>

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His work  
intitled Ob-  
jections to  
Freres.

It was near the same time that the reformer composed his important treatise called "The Sentence of the Curse Expounded."<sup>22</sup> The war in Flanders, waged "for the love of two false priests, who are open antichrists," is noticed in the sixteenth chapter as still in progress. The date of the work is thus determined. It is divided into twenty-nine chapters, and extends to a hundred quarto pages. As its title imports, its design is to expound the doctrine of spiritual censures.<sup>23</sup> Each chapter contemplates some well known application of this power; and while the authority itself is in some instances questioned, in others it is viewed as improperly exercised, and in others the men inflicting the supposed penalties are shewn to be themselves, and according to their own maxims, far greater offenders than the parties accused. Thus the denunciation

On the Sen-  
tence of the  
Curse Ex-  
pounded.

<sup>21</sup> See Vol. I. 265—272.

<sup>22</sup> MS. C.C.C. Cambridge.

<sup>23</sup> The censures principally noticed in this exposition, are those which were pronounced in the service of every church four times a year. The form thus began:—"I denounce, and shewe for accursed, all those that fraunchyse of holy chirche, bryke, or dystrouble, or are agen the state

"of holy chirche, or thereto assent with deed or counseyle. And also all those that pryve holy chirche of any ryght, or make of holy chirche any laye fee that is allowed or sanc-  
"tified," &c. &c. Festival, fol. 200. Having in this manner protected the ecclesiastical state, the form proceeds to other matters.



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uttered four times a year against heretics, is considered as more justly incurred by the reigning clergy, than by any portion of the laity, if by heresy be meant, "according to St. Austin, the "maintenance of error against holy writ;" and the anathemas pronounced on secular men who invade the property of the priesthood, are shewn to be much more applicable to churchmen themselves, who have long conspired to estrange the larger part of such possessions from their original design. In this manner, the whole machinery of spiritual domination is scrutinized. In its details, as well as in its more general features, it is exhibited as arising from presumption and impiety; as tending to perpetuate the present character of the clergy, and to enslave and debase every passion and faculty in the soul of their victims. The solemn and often repeated counsel of the writer is, that men should study the will of God, and allow their apprehensions of good or evil to be affected by human authority, only as the exercise of that authority should be known to accord with the scriptures. The work, indeed, is replete with almost every sentiment distinguishing the religion of the Bible from that of the papal power.

Of Prelates,  
Curates, and  
Priesthood.

A few months only could have elapsed since publishing the above treatise, when the reformer composed his work "On Prelates," and nearly contemporary with this was the publication of his work, intitled, "How the Office of Curates is "ordained of God," and of another described as "For the Order of Priesthood."<sup>24</sup> The first of

<sup>24</sup> MS. C. C. C. Cambridge. See of the first of these works is determined by the particulars stated in Vol. I. Chap. v. Note 8. The date

these publications consists of forty-three chap- CHAP.  
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 ters; the last, which is the shortest, extends to twenty-nine. The intention of the writer is to state, on the authority of scripture, the duties of the clergy sustaining the several ecclesiastical offices; to expose the frequent vices and deficiencies of the men on whom these solemn responsibilities devolved; and to point out the evils resulting from the degeneracy of churchmen, with respect both to the present and the future, to the people and themselves. In the next chapter some extracts will be given from each of these pieces, demonstrating the zeal with which Wycliffe continued to advocate the cause of enlightened piety, and of social improvement.

Another production which appeared during this active period of the reformer's life, is worthy of notice, as elicited by the controversy which arose, respecting the translating of the scriptures into the mother tongue, and as expressing the judgment of Wycliffe concerning the authority of tradition, and the infallibility of the church.<sup>25</sup> He commences by stating that "our Lord Jesus Christ ordained that his gospel should be fully known, and maintained against heretics, and men out of belief, by the writings of the four Evangelists; and that accordingly the devil studieth by Antichrist, and his false worldly clerks,

On the labour of Antichrist and of his clerks to destroy holy writ, &c. &c.

the note referred to. The work on Curates could not have appeared until about 1380, as it notices the arguments employed to prevent secular men from "meddling them with the gospel, to read it in the mother tongue." c. xxvi. The contents of the third are equally deci-

sive of its date, as subsequent to the persecutions which began soon after the insurrection of the commons. Note to the second edition.

<sup>25</sup> MS. C. C. C. Cambridge. "How antichrist and his clerks travail to destroy holy writ," &c. &c. &c.

CHAP. “ to destroy holy writ, and the belief of christian  
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“ men, by four accursed methods, or false reason-  
“ ings. 1st. That the church is of more autho-  
“ rity and credence than any gospel ; 2nd. That  
“ Augustine saith, he would not believe in the  
“ gospel if the church had not taught him so ;  
“ 3rd. That no man now alive knoweth which is  
“ the gospel, except it be by an approval of the  
“ church ; 4th. And hence, if men say that they  
“ believe this to be the gospel of Matthew, or  
“ John, they do so for no cause but that the church  
“ confirmeth it, and teacheth it.” In support of  
the first assertion, it was usual to remark, that  
the supreme authority of the church is evident  
from the fact, that in the early ages it devolved  
upon its members to distinguish between the true  
and the spurious gospels. But to this it is replied,  
that “ these far-sighted heretics understand by the  
“ church, the pope of Rome, and his cardinals,  
“ and the multitude of worldly priests, assenting  
“ to his simony and lordship as above that of all  
“ the kings and emperors of this world. It were  
“ not to their purpose else thus to magnify the  
“ church.” It is contended, however, that eccle-  
siastics alone do not constitute the church ; and  
if they did, the pastors of primitive times are de-  
scribed as men of holy life, and moved by the  
Holy Ghost, whereas the clergy of later ages have  
too often betrayed their contempt of every thing de-  
serving the name of sanctity. Still they claim the  
homage due to infallible guides. But it is argued,  
that to concede their pretensions, must be to share  
in the guilt of their presumption and impiety.  
The term church, as used by Augustine, is inter-

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—

puted as referring merely “ to Christ, the head of  
“ holy church, to the saints in heaven, and to the  
“ apostles.” The men who assert that the most  
illustrious of the fathers “ would not have be-  
“ lieved the gospel of Jesus Christ, unless the  
“ accursed multitude of worldly clerks had ap-  
“ proved it,” are described as adhering to this  
artifice for the purpose of colouring their own  
“ false understanding and heresy, by the name  
“ of that holy doctor. For by this means, the  
“ clerks of Antichrist condemn the faith of chris-  
“ tian men, and the commandments of God, and  
“ the doctrines of charity, and bring in their own  
“ wayward laws—therefore christian men should  
“ stand to the death for the maintenance of Christ’s  
“ gospel, and for the true understanding thereof,  
“ obtained by holy life and great study !”

The four assertions above stated, are said to be  
the four wheels which chiefly accelerate the car  
of Antichrist through the world. In meeting the  
two remaining objections, the writer affirms, in  
powerful language, that the most obscure student  
of the Bible may find in that book a more certain  
guide to truth, than in the pontiffs, or in the wisest  
of their councils. “ Christian men,” he observes,  
“ are certain of the reality of their faith by the  
“ gracious gift of Jesus Christ; and that the  
“ truth in the gospel was taught by Christ and his  
“ apostles, though all the clerks of Antichrist say  
“ the contrary never so fast, and on pain of their  
“ curse, and imprisonment, and burning. And  
“ this faith is not grounded on the pope and his  
“ cardinals, for then it must fail, and be undone,  
“ as they fail and are sometimes destroyed ; but

CHAP. “ it rests on Jesus Christ, God and man, and on  
VII.  
—— “ the Holy Trinity, and so it may never fail,  
“ except from his default, who while he should  
“ love and serve God, faileth in these things.  
“ Almighty God, and his truth, are the foundation  
“ of the faith of christian men; and as St. Paul  
“ saith, ‘ other foundation may no man set beside  
“ that which is set, that is, Jesus Christ.’ There-  
“ fore, though Antichrist and all his clerks were  
“ buried deep in hell, for their simony and pride,  
“ and other sins, yet the faith of the christian  
“ faileth not, because these are not the ground  
“ thereof, but Jesus Christ. He is our God, and  
“ our best Master; and ever ready to teach true  
“ men all things which are profitable, and needful  
“ to their souls. But they would have, that  
“ whatever these prelates teach openly and main-  
“ tain stedfastly, were of as great authority, and  
“ even more than is the gospel of Christ. And  
“ thus they would destroy holy writ, and christian  
“ faith, and at length maintain that whatever they  
“ do is no sin. But christian men receive their  
“ faith of God, as his gracious gift. He giveth  
“ them the knowing, and the understanding of  
“ truths, needful to save their souls; giving them  
“ grace to assent in their heart to those truths.  
“ And if Antichrist say that each man may  
“ pretend that he has a right faith, and a good  
“ understanding of holy writ when he is in error;  
“ we answer, let a man seek in all things truly  
“ the honour of God, and live justly to God and  
“ man; and to him, God will not fail in any  
“ thing that is needful, neither in faith nor under-  
“ standing, nor in answer against his enemies.”

He concludes by praying "that God Almighty  
 " would strengthen his little flock against Anti-  
 " christ, that they may seek truly the honour of  
 " Jesus Christ, and the salvation of the souls of  
 " men; that they may despise Antichrist's boast-  
 " ing and pretended power, and willingly, and  
 " even joyfully suffer pain and reproach in the  
 " world for the name of Jesus Christ and his  
 " gospel; affording a steady example to others to  
 " follow them, so as to conquer the high bliss of  
 " heaven by glorious martyrdom, as other saints  
 " before them have done. Jesu! for thy endless  
 " might, endless wisdom, endless goodness, and  
 " charity, grant to us sinful wretches this love of  
 " thee. Amen."

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There is yet one composition belonging to this period, which must obtain a passing notice. It is on "the seven deadly sins," in treating of which, the reformer adverts to the crusade against the antipope, and delivers some novel sentiments on the practice of war. The treatise consists of about eighty quarto pages, and, as its title will indicate, it touches on a variety of topics.<sup>26</sup> By dividing the members of the visible church into three classes, the writer is enabled to shew how the same forbidden passions were operating through the different portions of society; but the chief peculiarity of the work, is its announcement of those humane doctrines with respect to war, which have been advocated with no mean ability, in more recent times, by the disciples of Penn, and Barclay. The doctrine of the con-

Treatise on  
the seven  
deadly sins.

<sup>26</sup> MS. Bibl. Bodl. The same topics occur in the third book of his Tria-

logus, and are treated in the same manner.

CHAP. temporary clergy is said to be, "that it is lawful  
 VII. "to annoy an enemy in whatever way you can."  
 But it is remarked, that "the charity of Christ  
 "biddeth the contrary." Nevertheless, "to keep  
 "men fighting, though humanity teaches that men  
 "should not fight, Antichrist argues, that as an  
 "adder by his nature stings a man who treads on  
 "him, why should not we fight against our  
 "enemies, especially as they would else destroy  
 "us, and ruin their own souls? It is for love,  
 "therefore, that we chastise them. But what man  
 "that hath wit, cannot see this fallacy?"

With respect to all offensive wars, he thus writes. "As to the title of conquest, we should  
 "understand that if God enjoin conquest, it may  
 "then be lawful, as in the case of the children  
 "of Israel. When a kingdom by sin has forfeited,  
 "against its chief Lord Christ, in punishment of  
 "such trespass, he may give it to another  
 "people. But men should not dream that a  
 "people have so sinned, and that God will thus  
 "punish them, except God tell it them." If to  
 this it be objected, that the pope approves crusades,  
 it is urged in reply, that as St. Peter could err,  
 his successor may perhaps be found to inherit  
 his infirmity in that respect along with his power.  
 It is admitted that under the law devout men  
 were soldiers, but it is remarked that they fought  
 with God's enemies, to avenge God's injuries, and  
 for no other cause; and whatever hostility is com-  
 menced without a special commission from above,  
 is declared to be no less criminal under the present  
 dispensation, than it would have been under the  
 Jewish theocracy. An attention to this simple



fact is noticed, as including every thing necessary to realize the vision of the prophet, when men shall break their swords into ploughshares, and spears into pruninghooks, and nations shall learn war no more. CHAP.  
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The means of self-defence, however, are not considered as relinquished, even by the man who deems an appeal to mortal conflict, to be in every case unlawful. It is observed, “that angels with-  
“ stood fiends, and many men with right of law  
“ withstand their enemies, and yet they kill  
“ them not, neither fight with them. The wise  
“ men of the world hold this for wisdom, and  
“ have thus vanquished their enemies without  
“ striking them; and men of the gospel, by  
“ patience, and the prospect of rest and peace,  
“ have vanquished through the suffering of death,  
“ just as we may do now. But here men of the  
“ world come and say, that by this wise, king-  
“ doms would be destroyed; but here our faith  
“ teaches, that since Christ is our God, kingdoms  
“ should be thus established, and their enemies  
“ overcome. But peradventure some men would  
“ lose their worldly riches—and what harm were  
“ thereof? Well, indeed, I know, that men will  
“ scorn this doctrine. But men who would be  
“ martyrs for the law of God, will hold thereby.  
“ Lord, what honour falls to a knight that he kills  
“ many men; the hangman killeth many more,  
“ and with a better title. Better were it for men  
“ to be butchers of beasts, than butchers of their  
“ brethren!”<sup>27</sup> As according to “common law,  
“ no man will make battle, except he have leave

<sup>27</sup> MS. Hom. Bib. Reg. 18. b. ix. 109.

CHAP. VII. “from the prince of the people, so,” it is observed,  
 — “no man should take vengeance, unless God move  
 “him, and warn him as his instrument, saying,  
 “*how* he will have vengeance.” Even knights,  
 though “approved of God to defend his church  
 “by strength,” are regarded as under the inhibi-  
 tion “to kill no man.”

While such were the reformer's sentiments on war in general, the reader will expect his loud condemnation of the martial enterprise entrusted to the bishop of Norwich. It is thus he refers to it. “Christ is a good shepherd, for he puts  
 “his own life for the saving of the sheep. But  
 “Antichrist is a wolf of ravening, for he ever  
 “does the reverse, putting many thousand lives  
 “for his own wretched life. By forsaking things  
 “which Christ has bid his priests forsake, he  
 “might end all this strife. Why is not he a  
 “fiend, stained foul with homicide, who though  
 “a priest, fights in such a cause? If man-  
 “slaying in others be odious to God, much more  
 “in priests, who should be the vicars of Christ.  
 “And I am certain, that neither the pope, nor  
 “all the men of his council, can produce a spark  
 “of reason to prove that he should do this.”<sup>28</sup> To  
 his flock at Lutterworth, he farther observes,  
 “Friars now say that bishops can fight best of all  
 “men, and that it falleth most properly to them,  
 “since they are lords of all this world. Thus,  
 “they say, Maccabeus fought, and Christ bade  
 “his disciples sell their coats, and buy them  
 “swords, but whereto, if not to fight? Thus friars  
 “make a great array, and stir up many men to

<sup>28</sup> MS. Codd. Ric. Jamesii, Bibl. Bodl.

“ fight. But Christ taught not his apostles to fight CHAP.  
 “ with a sword of iron, but with the sword of — VII.  
 “ God’s word, which standeth in meekness of  
 “ heart, and in the prudence of man’s tongue.  
 “ And as Christ was the meekest of men, so he  
 “ was most drawn from the world, and would not  
 “ judge or divide a heritage among men, and yet  
 “ he could have done that best.” Such facts  
 are said to deserve the attention “ of these two  
 “ popes, when they fight one with the other,  
 “ with the most blasphemous leasings that ever  
 “ sprang out of hell. But they were occupied  
 “ many years before in blasphemy, and in sinning  
 “ against God and his church. And this made  
 “ them to sin more, as an ambling blind horse,  
 “ when he beginneth to stumble, lasteth in his  
 “ stumbling, until he casts himself down.”<sup>29</sup>

It thus appears that it was not merely the act of invasion, but the slaughter of men under any circumstances, which the reformer considered as opposed to the spirit and the letter of christianity. It is also evident, that he was aware of the opposition and contempt which the advocates of such opinions must encounter, so long as the state of the world should continue to be at all such as it had hitherto been. But the New Testament was before him, and that volume was understood as requiring that each professor of the gospel should adhere to such modes of resistance only as are there prescribed, or as occur in the recorded example of Christ, and of his apostles. Such, it was urged, is the pattern, and such are the commands of the Redeemer. His

<sup>29</sup> MS. Codd. Ric. Jamesii, Bibl. Bodl.

CHAP. VII. injunctions in this particular were considered, more-  
 over, as clearly expressive of his benevolence ; in-  
 asmuch as the evils to be anticipated from adhering  
 to them, were believed to be trivial, when compared  
 with those which had so commonly attended the  
 schemes of conquest, vain-glory, and revenge.  
 The malignant influence of the laws of retaliation  
 had been long since ascertained, and the experi-  
 ment of the effect to be produced by the pacific  
 temper which the gospel enjoins, was said to have  
 been successfully made in the early and better  
 ages of the church. Men were therefore exhorted  
 to renounce those brute methods of adjusting dis-  
 putes, which had not only incurred the severest  
 of their present privations, and inflicted the deep-  
 est of their present woes, but which had so often  
 proved the grave of every virtue, and the parent  
 of every crime. The disastrous influence of war  
 on civilization, on literature, and liberty, the re-  
 former could deplore ; but its demoralizing effects,  
 and the desolation which it must forebode with  
 respect to eternity, filled his mind with amaze-  
 ment and dismay.

Extracts  
 from Wy-  
 cliffe's later  
 sermons.

The passage last cited from the pen of the re-  
 former, is from one in a series of sermons, deli-  
 vered to the parishioners of Lutterworth subsequent  
 to the opening of 1382. There is much in those  
 compositions, serving to disclose the feeling and  
 purpose of the preacher, at this important period  
 of his history ; and as these productions have been  
 hitherto unknown to the public, a few charac-  
 teristic extracts will not perhaps be unacceptable  
 to the reader. While so determined a foe to the  
 practice of war, the conflict in aid of truth and

piety is one in which he would have all the capabilities of men employed, and of this he frequently speaks in such language as the following. “The captain of our battle is Christ, both God and man; who hath the lordship of all this world, being the Lord of lords. What good knight then should dread him to fight in the armies of this Lord? From the words of Paul it followeth, that he is of more power than all the fiends that are in hell, or aught that may oppose him. And since he overcame the fiend who is the head of the contrary battle, he hath virtue by his manhood to overcome all the enemies of his spiritual knights. In this, the knights of Christ’s battle should be comforted, so as to fight in his cause, and therefore Paul biddeth us take our arms in God’s name.”<sup>30</sup> Adverting to the promise of the Saviour, which affirms that his servant shall be there, both in bliss and place, where he is, without end,” it is observed that men should accordingly be prepared “to follow Christ, although it be hard.” The substance of his doctrine on this important branch of christian duty, is thus stated. “Certainly man should more love his soul than his body: and always should he most love God, and his law: and whoever so loveth these, is ready to suffer the death of his body, for the love of his God.”<sup>31</sup>

The lecture following that from which the last extract is taken, is said to teach “as the former doth, how a man should ordain himself to suffer martyrdom.” It relates chiefly to the text,

<sup>30</sup> MS. Codd. Ric. Jamesii, Bibl. Bodl. 109.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 130.

CHAP. VII. “Whosoever loseth his life, for my sake, and the  
 “gospel’s, shall save it;” and the preacher remarks, “since the life of man is ordained of  
 “God, evermore to be, it is not lost to God, but  
 “he for whom this life is lost keepeth it well, and  
 “giveth it him in bliss in the other world. And  
 “who would not thus traffic with his own life?”  
 To hesitate, is “to fail in charity, and in the first  
 “commandment,” and to make light of the promises which speak of the glorious things to be accomplished in the saints, when their Lord shall appear in his kingdom to beautify the bodies which have been yielded as a sacrifice to him.<sup>32</sup>

On another occasion he describes the gospel for the day as “telling to the martyrs of Christ, “what perils shall befall his house,” and the persecutions foretold as to come upon his disciples, are said to be at present inflicted on good men. “They shall put them into holds falsely, and “shall punish them many ways. And often “shall they draw them to kings, and to justices “who are mighty in this world, and thus for “Christ shall they be punished. And like to “this falleth now, by the punishings of Anti-  
 “christ. But Jesus saith to his disciples, that “it shall fall to them for a witness that they “are on the true side. That they shall have a “clear answer to give, which all their adversaries shall not in any way withstand, and this “shall be from the love of God coming so openly “to them.” But this experience of the divine approbation, is said to be unknown to the ruling clergy, their propensities being, in general, too

<sup>32</sup> MS. Codd. Ric. Jamesii, Bibl. Bodl.

earthly to allow of their cherishing the communications of heavenly wisdom. “If a prelate feign that he hath power and wit given of God to rule his church, and doth all amiss in such things, following not God nor his law, certainly such a hypocrite uttereth first a falsehood, and by his treachery he leadeth the sheep of Christ amiss. And though the wasting of God’s goods be the worst of sins, because his goods are best, yet men that should be martyrs, are so smitten with cowardice, that they dare not speak a word for right belief in this matter, but as though men were beasts, do they constrain them to assent to falsehood as true. Such are many of the blasphemies and falsehoods invented by popes and other prelates; and whoever in Christ opposeth them, he may be a martyr if he dare. And better cause of martyrdom to God’s servants find we none. For as the maintaining of faith is the cause of martyrdom, so the maintenance of things which are not of faith should be reversed by christian men, for else might all faith be changed, the old put out, and new brought in. Thus they say, that it is of faith that the pope is head of holy church, and that whatsoever thing he affects to do, is performed of Christ, but a more perilous heresy was never feigned by the fiend.”<sup>33</sup> In the sermon concluding thus, the doctrines of the pope’s supremacy and infallibility, which are so strongly rejected, are noticed as forming the pressing questions of the orthodox.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> MS. Codd. Ric. Jamesii, Bibl. Bodl. 139.

<sup>34</sup> In another instance he thus complains of priests, as having taken away



CHAP.  
VII.

On the text, "Blessed are ye that weep now, for you shall laugh," he thus writes; "It is known that whosoever truly loveth God's law, must needs weep here over the enemies of Christ. For these who are God's servants, will be persecuted here for reproving of sinners who are God's enemies. But he is a coward against God who speaketh not boldly against sin. And therefore John the Baptist, and Christ's apostles, took example of Christ, and thus they wept always over sin. And since Christ in his three weepings, wept for other men's sins, he loveth not Christ and his mother well, who sorroweth not for the injury and despite that is done to them. But such as do this are men of charity, and shall rejoice at the day of doom." The various sufferings which attended the profession of a scriptural creed in the age of Wycliffe, are thus described. "Worldly men avoid such professors, and leave them to themselves. They are accursed of Antichrist; are put out of

the key of knowledge, and substituted their own tradition in the place of the scripture. "Since the kindred of the fiend is now most among priests, as it was in the time of Christ, true men should speak to them sharply as Christ did. For they have exiled the law of God by which they should work, and brought in the fiend's law by which they now govern. Christ often says how the lawyers watched him, that they might take something of his words to accuse him, and so doom him to death, and thus did those hypocrites pretend to fulfil the law. And thus it is at this day among these high-priests; for they have new laws made beside God's law, by which to doom men to death

as open heretics. To this doing they council not with God's law, but with established heresies which themselves hold, viz. that they may not sin nor err in such judgments. But all manner of men, who say that they should follow Christ's life, and leave their worldly life, they judge for heretics. But if they thus give themselves to lordships, forsaking the life of Christ, they are fiend's children and open antichrists. Christ's children they may not be, but if they follow him, and especially hold themselves in meekness and poverty. And here we may know men whether they dare be martyrs." MS. Codd. Ric. Jamesii, Bibl. Bodl. 145.

“ churches ; and are parted in prisons from other  
“ men of the world ; and in all these states they  
“ suffer reproofs. But if they are certain from  
“ the matter of their belief, that in all this they  
“ suffer for the cause of their God, they may be  
“ blessed and joyful in hope of their end ; even  
“ as a sick man will gladly suffer pain, when  
“ he hopeth thereby to come to health. And  
“ the joy which saints have when they suffer thus,  
“ is a manner of bliss which belongs to them  
“ here, and it is more of joy to them than all  
“ their worldly desires. Christ also telleth, that  
“ those who stand in his cause, have their names  
“ cast out as cursed men and heretics. So blind  
“ are their enemies, and so deep in their sin, that  
“ they call good evil, and evil good. But woe  
“ be to such ! And Christ biddeth his servants  
“ rejoyce in that day in their heart, and to shew  
“ a glad countenance to men that be about them,  
“ for certainly their mede is much in the king-  
“ dom of heaven. And this word comforteth  
“ simple men, who are called heretics, and ene-  
“ mies to the church, because they tell the  
“ law of God. For they are summoned and  
“ reprovèd in many ways, and are after put in  
“ prison, and burnt or killed, as though worse  
“ than thieves. And the masters in this per-  
“ secuting, are priests, high and low, and mostly  
“ friars ; as Christ was persecuted by Caiaphas,  
“ and other priests, but especially by the pha-  
“ risees. To all thus persecuted, this gospel is  
“ a comfort, for as certainly as traditions made  
“ beside the law of God, by priests, and scribes,  
“ and pharisees, blinded them in that law, and

CHAP. “made it despised—so it is now, by the new  
 VII. laws of men called decretals and decrees—  
 “but a remedy against this abuse, and one used  
 “of many men, is to despise all such laws when  
 “they are alleged; and to say unto men who  
 “allege them, that their honesty is more sus-  
 “pected for their citing of such laws, since  
 “God’s law telleth all truth that is needful to  
 “man.”<sup>35</sup>

It is in the following language that the reformer expresses his confidence in the power of truth, and as to the issue of every conflict sustained in its cause. “Men should not fear, except on account of sin, or the losing of virtues; since pain is just, and according to the will of God, and the truth is stronger than all their enemies. Why then should men fear or sorrow for it? The prophet bid his servant that he should not fear, because many more were with them than with the contrary part. Let a man stand in virtue and truth, and all this world overcometh him not; for if they overcome him with these, then they overcome God and his angels, and then they should make him to be no God.—Thus good men are comforted to put away fear, since be they never so few nor feeble, they believe that they may not be discomfited. Thus the words of Christ make his knights to be hardy.”<sup>36</sup>

One extract more, must suffice to exhibit the temper with which the reformer continued to the last to discharge his duties as a village teacher;

<sup>35</sup> MS. Codd. Ric. Jamesii, Bibl. Bodl. 136.

<sup>36</sup> MS. Codd. Ric. Jamesii, Bibl. Bodl. 166.

and the firmness, with which he constantly anticipated the infliction of the worst evils that his fidelity might be found to provoke. “ Know we  
“ not, that Peter wist well how he should spend  
“ God’s treasure, so as to profit his church?  
“ Who dare then put on Peter the charge, that  
“ he was negligent in this, that he spared that  
“ treasure of God which popes now wisely dispense? All men, therefore, but especially prelates, should oversee their state and their life, whether it be according to God’s law, or after the customs of the fiend. Such a reckoning every man should make, every day of his life; for this is a common word with many saints, ‘ each time that God hath given thee, will he ask full sharply as to how thou hast spent it, whether well in his service or amiss.’ That reckoning should each man fear; but especially high-priests, for their office is more perilous. And however men feign, their office is told in the law of Christ, how they should be occupied in three things as shepherds. They should wisely lead their sheep into the sound pastures of God’s law, and always put their own life to save their sheep against wolves. And these shepherds should not flee in the time when thieves slay the sheep, nor covet more the wool than they covet their soul’s health, for that is the wolf’s intent. If it be thus they take the office of shepherds, then are they wolves from the beginning. It follows then, that the time spent in labouring for high estate, for riches, or any other than God’s worship for the profit of their sheep, by the rules of God’s law, is time

CHAP. “wasted.” The preacher concludes a series of  
VII.  
similar admonitions by observing, that “such  
“oversight of our life, and especially of high  
“prelates, helpeth the church, and maketh men  
“to fear God, and serve him well.” Wycliffe  
could not be insensible, while reiterating these  
severe maxims, that the strictest comparisons  
would be frequently made between his sentiments  
thus published, and his general conduct. In the  
case of such a man, the only conclusion to be  
fairly adopted is, that his daily practice was such  
as fully accorded with his public instructions.

We are now approaching the close of the re-  
former’s history, and the passages from his  
writings which have occurred, must afford suf-  
ficient proof, that, as the evening of life was felt  
to be descending upon him, his devout antici-  
pations of future blessedness, his zeal in the cause  
of christian reformation, and his feelings with  
regard to the sufferings which his persecutors  
might be allowed to inflict upon him, were all  
greatly purified and elevated. To oppose the  
errors which time, and custom, and law had  
established; and to publish aloud the truths  
contained in the christian scriptures; he affirms  
to be the imperative obligation of every christian  
man, and to be such notwithstanding the evils  
incurred should be scorn and poverty, imprison-  
ment and death. The course of activity, which  
would assuredly bring these consequences along  
with it, is variously and minutely described; and  
is strictly that, which formed his own daily em-  
ployment. The closing years of his life, accord-  
ingly, were passed in the strong expectation,

that the cell of the convict, if not the horrors of CHAP. VII.  
the stake, would ere long be added to the con-  
tumely and poverty which he had already incurred. His auditors well knew, that no wrath could equal that which would be certainly excited, by his opposing the mass of those fictions in relation to the soul and the future, which had enabled the priesthood to attract to themselves their vast possessions, and their worldly dominion. Those fictions were nevertheless assailed, and the purposes to which they were applied, are described as those which could prove ensnaring only to the children of Antichrist. While nations are called upon to reject much of that spiritual authority which their religious guides had assumed; their rulers are urged, as they would escape at the day of doom, to divest that class of men of their needless wealth, and of that vain authority, which certain delusive tenets had enabled them to acquire, and which as certainly as the scriptures were true, must expose the blind and their leaders to the same pit of destruction. The language of his conduct, amid the growing power of his enemies, would seem to be, "To live, and to be silent, is, with me, impossible—the guilt of such treason against the Lord of heaven is more to be dreaded than many deaths. Let the blow therefore fall. Enough I know of the men whom I oppose, of the times on which I am thrown, and of the mysterious providence which relates to our sinful race, to believe that the stroke may ere long descend. But my purpose is unalterable. I wait its coming!"

The temper of his chief opponents was suf-

CHAP. VII. ficiently known, to satisfy him that the continuance of his personal liberty, and even of his life, arose less from their inclination than from their weakness.<sup>37</sup> But his anticipations of a season, in which their power would be equal to their malice, were not to be realized. The fact admits of explanation. It was known, that the duke of Lancaster still entertained a favourable judgment of his character. The papal schism absorbed the attention of the pontiffs. And the domestic disquietudes in this country, had long rendered the factions who governed it fearful, in a great degree, of each other. In addition to these causes, as serving to delay the introduction of more sanguinary persecutions, the declining health of the reformer should be noticed. It was probable that his career would soon terminate: and with him, his partisans may have been expected to disappear. Previous to his death, he needed the assistance of a curate in performing his parochial duties. In this infirm state, however, he continued at times to officiate; and he is said to have been employed in administering the bread of the eucharist, when assailed by his last sickness. The paralysis which now seized his frame, deprived him at once of consciousness, and after an illness of a few days, issued in the removal of his devout spirit to the abode of natures more congenial with his own. This event happened on the last day of December, in the year

<sup>37</sup> MS. De Obedientia Prelatorum. In the Trialogus, Truth remarks that a great number of the religious, and of the people called christians, were ac-

customed to declaim against the doctrine of the reformer, "studying in "a thousand ways, to *deprive him of* "life." iv. c. 4



1384.<sup>38</sup> Many good men have prayed to be called CHAP.  
VII. to their rest, while occupied in such services. — We know not that it was so with Wycliffe: but we know that he was taken “from the evil to come.” It is not the province of the biographer to supply the deficiencies in his materials from the stores of his imagination, or we might dwell on the probabilities of the spectacle exhibited, in the death chamber, and the burial scene of such a man! We leave his enemies to indulge their feeling of triumph; and his followers to mourn a loss, which no second man was to supply. Some farther observations on the character of this much-injured confessor; and on the influence of his doctrine, with respect to the reformation of the sixteenth century, will be found in a subsequent chapter of this volume. But before proceeding to those topics, it will be proper to take a more complete, and a more connected view, of the opinions which he laboured to propagate.

<sup>38</sup> See the extract from the Bocking Register, Vol. I. 346, and Walsingham, Hypod. Neust. From Walsingham, and from the Teignmouth Chronicle, it appears that the attack of palsy took place on the 29th of the month — the festival of Thomas-a-Becket, and his death on the 31st, the day consecrated to the memory of

Silvester; and it is observed by Walsingham, that against both of these saints the reformer often directed his blasphemies. Of Silvester, however, he frequently spoke with respect; but the saintship of Becket he treated with contempt. Lewis, c. vii. Trial. iv. c. 17. Hom. Bib. Reg.

## CHAPTER VIII.

*On the Opinions of John Wycliffe, D. D.*

DESIGN OF THE CHAPTER. — THE DOCTRINE OF WYCLIFFE RESPECTING THE POPE'S TEMPORAL POWER. — THE SECULAR EXEMPTIONS OF THE CLERGY. — THE GENERAL AUTHORITY OF THE MAGISTRATE. — THE LIMITS OF THAT AUTHORITY. — THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE MAGISTRATE WITH RESPECT TO THE CHURCH. — THE CUSTOMS OF PATRONAGE. — TITHES AND ECCLESIASTICAL ENDOWMENTS. — THE PRINCIPLES OF THE REFORMER'S THEORY DERIVED IN PART FROM THE EXISTING SYSTEM. — HIS REVERENCE FOR THE PRIESTLY OFFICE. — HIS JUDGMENT OF THE CONTEMPORARY PRIESTHOOD. — A SUMMARY OF HIS DOCTRINE RELATING TO THE CIVIL ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANITY AND CLERICAL REVENUE. — HIS OPINIONS RELATING TO SIMONY. — THE SPIRITUAL POWER OF THE POPE. — THE HIERARCHY. — THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS. — THE NATURE OF A CHRISTIAN CHURCH. — THE POWER OF THE KEYS. — PURGATORY AND MASSES FOR THE DEAD. — THE INVOCATION OF SAINTS. — THE WORSHIP OF IMAGES. — CONFESSION. — THE DOCTRINE OF INDULGENCES. — THE CELIBACY OF THE CLERGY. — THE SACRAMENTS. — TRANSUBSTANTIATION. — PUBLIC WORSHIP. — SUFFICIENCY OF THE SCRIPTURES, AND THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT. — A SUMMARY OF HIS THEOLOGICAL DOCTRINE.

CHAP. VIII.            MANY of the doctrines which distinguished the creed of Wycliffe, have been introduced in the preceding chapters, and in the order in which they appear in his writings. But in some instances, they have obtained a passing notice only; and in every case, they admit of a more complete illustration from the Wycliffe manuscripts, and of a more advantageous exhibition as connected with the reformer's general doctrine. There are

Design of  
the chapter.

opinions, also, relating both to doctrine and discipline, which he laboured to disseminate, but which have not obtained any place in our narrative.

CHAP.  
VIII.  
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During the middle ages, the parties who were most offended by the false doctrines, or by the political usurpations of the papacy, and whose efforts were to issue in so great a diminution of its opulence and power, are found, in general, directing their first and most vigorous attacks against its latest corruptions. These could not be readily shielded by the plea of ancient custom. Forming also, as they did, the more recent measures of a power, which had long dispensed with the restraints of modesty in prosecuting its system of encroachment, they were commonly matters in which the want of reason was quite as obvious as the want of antiquity. Among the assumptions of this class, the doctrine of the pope's temporal power will claim our first attention. It is not surprising, that the modern catholic, whose creed has been so materially affected by the progress of society, should regret the prominence conferred by protestant historians on this tenet, as interwoven with the story of his church. The facts, however, with which it is connected, afford those illustrations of human character, and of the necessary tendencies of the system which produced them, that are too instructive to be wholly forgotten. The avowed successors of the Galilean fisherman, have gravely assumed an authority over all worlds; disposing at pleasure of the crowns and kingdoms of the present, and of the weal or woe of the future!

Doctrine of  
Wycliffe on  
the pope's  
temporal  
power.

CHAP. To prevent the return of any similar tyranny, it  
 VIII.  
 ——— is important that this scheme of successful ambition should be frequently depicted in its native colours, and viewed in connexion with the principles which form its true source. In a sameness of circumstances, man has ever shown himself the same.

That every political government is, and ought to be, subject to the dominion of the spiritual church, is taught by Baronius as a verity that should never have been questioned. Nor is there any real difference between this opinion, and that expressed by Bellarmine, as the general doctrine of catholics in his day.<sup>1</sup> From Wycliffe's defence of the English parliament, in abolishing the census which had been extorted from king John, it appears, that previous to the year 1366, he had learnt to discard this preposterous claim as novel, fraudulent, and impious. It was in consequence of the pontiff's political interferences, founded on this doctrine, that he became, in the language of our reformer, "the evil man-slayer, poisoner, " and burner of the servants of Christ." Wycliffe complains indignantly of the men who profess to regard "this root of all the misgovern-  
 "ance in the church, as the head of holy church—  
 "and as the most holy father, who may not sin." With equal regret he observes, "that if men  
 "foolishly make a vow to go to Rome, Jerusalem,  
 "or Canterbury, or on any other pilgrimage, that  
 "they will value more than the great vow to keep  
 "God's commandments, and to forsake the fiend  
 "and all his works, which was made at their

<sup>1</sup> Apologia, c. 13. Barrow on the Pope's Supremacy, p. 6.

“ christening. And if a man break the highest CHAP. VIII.  
 “ commands of God, the rudest parish priest  
 “ shall absolve him anon ; but of the vows made  
 “ from our own head, though many times against  
 “ the will of God, no man shall absolve, except  
 “ a great worldly bishop, or the most worldly  
 “ priest of Rome ! the master of the emperor !  
 “ the fellow of God ! the Deity on earth !” While  
 the monarch of that worldly kingdom which had  
 been introduced into the church was thus resisted  
 and rebuked ; it is in the following language, that  
 the reformer adverts to the conduct of the men  
 who were concerned, more or less, to perpetuate  
 this degrading usurpation. “ Commonly, the new  
 “ laws which the clergy have made, are cunningly  
 “ devised to bring down the power of lords  
 “ and kings which God ordained, and to make  
 “ themselves lords, and to have all things at their  
 “ doom. Certainly it seemeth, that these worldly  
 “ prelates would more completely destroy the  
 “ power of kings and lords, which God ordained  
 “ for the government of christian men, than God  
 “ destroyeth the power even of the fiend. For  
 “ God, in setting a term which Satan may do,  
 “ and no more, still suffereth his power to last,  
 “ for the profit of christian men, and the just  
 “ punishment of evil doers. But these worldly  
 “ clerks would never cease, if unchecked, until  
 “ they had destroyed kings and lords with their  
 “ regalia and power.”<sup>2</sup>

It was not unusual, however, in the ages before On the secular ex-  
 emptions of  
 the clergy.  
 Luther, for ecclesiastics who denied the authority  
 of the popes as extending over the kingdoms of

<sup>2</sup> MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. 3, 6, 11. See also Vol. I. Chap. ii.

CHAP.  
VIII.  

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the world, to admit its validity as extended over the property of their own order. To escape the exactions of princes, churchmen had frequently ventured to plead this claim of their spiritual sovereign. But it was among the early doctrines of Wycliffe, that the authority of the magistrate should be final as to the wealth of the clergy, and as to the whole of their conduct, considered as members of society. “Worldly clerks and “feigned religious,” he observes, “break and “destroy the king’s peace and his realm. For “the prelates of this world, and the priests, high “and low, say freely, and write in their law, “that the king hath no jurisdiction nor power “over their persons, nor over the goods of holy “church. And yet Christ and his apostles were “most obedient to kings and lords, and taught “all men to be subject to them, and to serve “them truly and cheerfully in bodily works, and “to fear them, and honour them above all other “men. The wise king Solomon also, put down “a high bishop, who was unfaithful to him and “his kingdom, and exiled him, and ordained a “good priest in his room, as the book of Kings “telleth. And Jesus Christ paid tribute to the “emperor, and commanded men to pay him “tribute. St. Peter also commandeth christian “men to be subject to every ordinance of man, “whether unto the king as more high than others, “or unto dukes, as sent of him, to the vengeance “of evil doers, and the praising of good men. “Also St. Paul commandeth by the authority of “God that ‘every soul be subject to the higher “powers, for there is no power but of God.

“ Princes are not to the dread of good works, but  
 “ of evil. Wilt thou not dread the power?—do  
 “ good, and thou shalt have praise of the same,  
 “ for he is God’s minister to thee for good. If  
 “ thou hast done evil, assuredly thou shouldst  
 “ fear, for he beareth not the sword in vain.  
 “ Therefore ye must needs be subject, not only  
 “ for wrath, but also for conscience. For there-  
 “ fore ye give tribute, they being the ministers  
 “ of God serving to this same thing. Therefore  
 “ yield ye to all men’s debts, to whom tribute,  
 “ tribute; to whom toll, toll; to whom dread,  
 “ dread; to whom honour, honour.’ Our Sa-  
 “ viour, Jesus Christ, meekly suffered a painful  
 “ death under Pilate, not excusing himself from  
 “ that jurisdiction, by virtue of his office. And  
 “ St. Paul professed himself ready to suffer death,  
 “ by the doom of the emperor’s justice, if he  
 “ were worthy of death, as the deeds of the  
 “ apostles teach. And Paul appealed to the  
 “ heathen emperor, from the priests of the Jews,  
 “ to be under his jurisdiction, and so to save his  
 “ life.<sup>3</sup> Lord, who hath made our worldly clergy  
 “ exempt from the king’s jurisdiction, and chas-  
 “ tening, since God hath given kings this office  
 “ over all misdoers? Clerks, and particularly  
 “ high-priests, should be most meek and obe-  
 “ dient to the laws of this world, as were Christ  
 “ and his apostles; and thus be a mirror to all  
 “ men, that they may yield this meekness and  
 “ obedience to the king, and to his righteous  
 “ laws. What sturdy robbers and traitors then,

<sup>3</sup> It was thus the reformer would authority. See Chap. iii. of this vo-  
 vindicate his own appeal to the same lume.



CHAP. “are these to lords and kings in refusing this  
 VIII. “obedience, and in thus giving an example to  
 “all the men of the land to become rebels against  
 “the king and the lords. For in this, and in  
 “what they teach, they instruct the commons  
 “of the land, both in words and deeds, to be un-  
 “faithful and rebellious against the king. And  
 “this seemeth well, according to their new law  
 “of decretals, where proud clerks have ordained  
 “that our clergy shall pay no subsidy nor tax,  
 “nor any thing for the keeping of our king and  
 “our realm, without assent from the worldly  
 “priest of Rome. And yet many times this  
 “proud worldly priest is an enemy of our land,  
 “and secretly maintaining our enemies in war  
 “against us with our own gold. Thus an alien  
 “priest, and the proudest of all priests, they  
 “make the chief lord over the whole of the goods  
 “which clerks possess in this kingdom, and that  
 “is the greater part thereof. And where are  
 “there greater traitors, either to God, or holy  
 “church, and especially to our liege lord and his  
 “kingdom? An alien worldly priest, and an  
 “enemy to us, is made chief lord over the greater  
 “part of our country!”<sup>4</sup>

To this decisive passage, others of the same import, and equally bold in their character, might be added. In a subsequent chapter of the same work, the writer has supposed a number of extreme cases, with a view to exhibit more vividly the evils which must be inseparable from these clerical exemptions. Thus he remarks,—should churchmen refuse the payment of the most lawful

<sup>4</sup> MS. *Sentence of the Curse Expounded*, c. 11.

debts, such is the nature of the immunities which they claim, that no lay authority would be left to enforce it. And were this privileged class of men to determine on conveying the whole of their wealth to another soil, the nation may do nothing to prevent a measure, which, if adopted, must reduce it to poverty. For the same reason, it is argued, were the clergy to conspire the death of the king, of the court, and of the nobility of the realm, neither the monarch, nor the aristocracy, might punish these daring delinquents with the smallest possible forfeiture of liberty or goods. To such uncourtly extremes, indeed, is the reformer carried by the warmth of his indignation, that he ventures to suppose the college of cardinals transformed into a regular banditti; and he enquires what the state of a people must be, who should be weak enough to believe that, to resist these holy depredators, must be to incur the guilt of sacrilege, and to sink into the lowest perdition!<sup>5</sup>

But the reformer is said to have taught a doctrine which has been sometimes designated, “dominion founded on grace.” This article of his creed was described as hostile to every social

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On the  
general au-  
thority of  
the magis-  
trate.

<sup>5</sup> MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. 19. Dr. Lingard (Hist. iv. 262,) has cited the reformer's language in his Trialogus (iv. 18.) which expresses his doctrine respecting the duty of lords to deprive a church habitually delinquent of her possessions; and has quoted an extract from the passage, of which the substance is given in the text, as showing that the writer “afterwards attempted to explain it away.” But it remains to be

shown that the Sentence of the Curse “Expounded” did not appear until after the Trialogus. It is certain that they were published so nearly together, that the priority of either can be of no moment. A few months only could have intervened. The passage, too, instead of being what Dr. Lingard insinuates, is one which, as the reader will perceive, presents the most vigorous enforcement of the obnoxious article intended.

CHAP. institution; and being in consequence suited to  
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———awaken the jealousy of the civil power, a cautious prominence was given to it by his enemies. Woodford, a well-known adversary of Wycliffe, laboured to make his refutation of this supposed heresy as formal and imposing as possible. Subsequently, the fathers of the council of Constance, in their great care to preserve the regal authority from injury, placed this dangerous tenet under their anathema; and the cardinal Bellarmine, moved by the same solicitude, assures the king of England, that the doctrine which sanctifies the murder of princes, and which the monarch had inadvertently imputed to catholics, is the property of the innovators, “certainly, of John “Wycliffe.” But with the consistency which usually attends the defence of a bad cause, the enemies of the reformer have been no less forward on other occasions, in charging him with making the most flattering appeals to the secular authorities, in hope of arraying them against the power and possessions of the priesthood. If this was his design, and he has scarcely a foe who does not impute it to him, it is needless to enquire whether he could, for a moment, have regarded it as expedient, to become the abettor of any doctrine unfriendly to the influence of the civil power. In the very consistent language of party zeal, the sword of the magistrate was at once his idol and his hatred; a weapon which at one moment he would extend far beyond the due sphere of its influence, and at another, consign to its scabbard, that every lawless passion might be loosened on the world. There are other facts,

also, which warrant a suspicion, as to the fidelity, or the correct information, of the persons who dwell with such marked interest on the pernicious tendencies of the doctrine adverted to. The authorities cited by Wycliffe, in support of this tenet, whatever it was, are St. Augustine and St. Bernard,—names, which have not often commended themselves to the agents of political discord. And it is no less remarkable, that amid the voluminous works of the reformer, one only has been cited as really containing this alarming dogma. In his English compositions—which were by far the greater number, and which were alone addressed to the people—it is not in more than two or three instances, that the remotest indication of it occurs. Yet from the period of his death, to the present hour, this obnoxious speculation has been described as the reformer's “favourite maxim.”<sup>6</sup> From this fact, the reader

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<sup>6</sup> Such is Dr. Lingard's description of it. (Hist. iv.) The doctor also refers to the seventeenth chapter in the fourth book of the *Triologus*, as containing this tenet. The passage in that chapter which relates to it, is given below, and it will not perhaps occur to the reader as very deeply charged either with theological or political heresy. “Titulo autem originalis justiciæ habuit Christus omnia bona mundi, ut sepæ declarat Augusti, illo titulo, vel titulo gratiæ justorum sunt omnia, sed longe ab illo titulo civilis possessio. Unde Christus et sui Apostoli sprete dominatione civili, fuerunt de habitatione pure: secundum illum titulum contentati. Ideo regula Christi est, que nullus snorum discipulorum presumat protemporalibus suis contentere. Ut patet Mat. vi. qui aufert quæ tua sunt ne repetas. Sed longe

“sunt leges civilis et consuetudo dominantium seculariter ab ista sententia. Et hæc ratio quare leges istæ mundanæ et executio furiosa illarum: sunt tam culpabiliter etiam inter clericos introductæ. Et patet que conclusio quam infers est concendenda, sed habitio distinguenda. Nam habere civiliter cum necessitate ad sollicitudinem circa temporalia et leges hominum observandus, debet omino clericis interdici. Et quantum ad silvestrum et alios est mihi probabile, quæ in recipiendo taliter dotationem graviter peccaverunt. Sed possumus supponere que de hoc fructuose posterius pænitebant. Et sio concedo tibi que licet clericis habere temporalia, sed titulo et modo habendi quem deus instituit.” p. 129. From this passage it would appear that such was the faith of Wycliffe

CHAP. will judge as to the force of that prejudice with  
VIII. which the memory of this man has been assailed.

It would not be difficult to collect a volume of extracts from the writings of Wycliffe, to demonstrate that no doctrine was embraced by him at all affecting the legal possession of property. He knew that many things might be lawful, as done by the Supreme Judge, which would be flagrant injustice, as performed by man, except in obedience to a mandate from that Judge. To illustrate his meaning, with respect to cases of the last description, he appeals to the conduct of the Israelites toward the nations of Canaan.<sup>7</sup> This

with regard to the mediation of Christ, that he considered every man as indebted to the grace of the Redeemer for the benefits of this world, no less than for the hope of a better; and that accordingly he viewed the sin which incurred the forfeiture of heaven, as separating the offender at the same moment from all claim, with respect to God, as to the honours or possessions of the earth. Such is the theology of the scriptures. But it is insinuated, that the reformer proceeded from this general statement to infer, as a general consequence, that every such delinquent might be divested of property or office by the saints, as of things forfeited with respect to the supreme Lord. Could the rector of Lutterworth be shewn to have adopted such a conclusion, it must have been in some moment of derangement. We are not dependant, however, on such a supposition. When this scene of probation shall reach its close, it will appear that the doctrine of Wycliffe, however much despised or calumniated, is a momentous truth, and that no dominion can have the element of duration but what is founded in grace: And though it was not his manner to blend the re-

tributions of a future world with the arrangements peculiar to the present, he might deem it important to admonish the worldly and the powerful as to the ground on which the adjustments of that great crisis will take place; assuring them that the delay of those fearful decisions which will then be announced, arose less from any legal impediment, than from the long-suffering of God. The only notices, however, of this doctrine which I have met with in the reformer's writings are in his answer to the question of Richard's first parliament, (Vol. I. Chap. iv.) in one of his homilies, (Bib. Reg. 97,) and in his treatise on the Seven Deadly Sins. In the first instance it is applied to the office and possessions of the clergy only; in the second it is merely a passing observation; and in the last it will be remembered as introduced to discountenance, and not to encourage an invasion of the rights of others. See Chap. vii.

<sup>7</sup> MS. on the Seven Deadly Sins. See Chap. vii. The additions which I have been able to make to what was previously known respecting this much controverted subject, consist in the important fact stated in the preceding

distinction, however, which was never absent from the reformer's mind, appears to have wholly escaped the discernment of his accusers. It is not to be denied that he regarded the churchman convicted of mortal sin as having forfeited his office. In every such case, he would have transferred the office so degraded, together with its jurisdiction and its revenue, to other and more worthy hands; and this maxim it was, which brought upon him the reproach of favouring a disruption of the social system.<sup>8</sup> To save themselves from the consequences of such a doctrine, the clergy laboured to make it appear that the creed of their assailant teemed with revolutionary novelties, such as must apply to civil, no less than to ecclesiastical offices, and prove as perilous to the possessions of the laity, as to those of the church.

It is in the following language, that Wycliffe complains of the injury thus done to himself and his followers. "Prelates slander poor priests, "and other christian men, saying, they will not "obey their sovereigns, nor fear the curse, nor "keep the laws, but despise all things that are "not to their liking; and that they are, therefore, "worse than jews or pagans; and that all lords "and prelates, and mighty men should destroy "them, or else they will destroy holy church, "and make each man to live as him liketh, and "nothing may more destroy Christendom."<sup>9</sup> In

note, and in a few extracts which are more explicit on the points at issue than any thing hitherto cited from the reformer's writings. It can, I trust, be no longer doubted that the opponents of Wycliffe attached a

meaning and an importance to this doctrine, which he had never himself attached to it.—Note to the second edition.

<sup>8</sup> See Vol. I. Chap. iv. p. 361—365.

<sup>9</sup> MS. De Obedientia Prelatorum.

CHAP. meeting these serious charges, it is admitted, that  
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“ the fiend moveth some men to say, that christian men should not be servants nor vassals to heathen lords, since they are false to God, and less worthy than themselves. Neither should they be such to christian lords, since they are brethren in kind, (by nature) and Jesus Christ bought christian men on the cross, and made them free.” But it is observed, in reply, that “ the apostles Peter and Paul have written against this heresy in God’s law,” and their various lessons on obedience to magistrates are so explained, as to favour a submission which, if faulty at all, is so from excess. Conscious of injury, it is with becoming feeling he remarks, “ yet some men who are out of charity, slander poor priests with this error, namely, that servants or tenants may lawfully withhold rents and services from their lords, when lords are openly wicked in their living. And they invent this treacherous falsehood against poor priests, to make lords to hate them, and not to maintain that truth of God, which they teach openly for his honour, for the profit of the realm, for the establishing of the king’s power, and the destroying of sin.” He afterwards exposes the sophistry by which the enemies of the poor priests frequently succeeded in procuring a currency for this slander among the laity. “ The feigned reasoning of the clerks of Antichrist is this: if subjects may lawfully withhold tithes and offerings from curates who live in open lechery, or in other great sins, and do not the office—then servants and tenants may



“lawfully withdraw their service and rents from  
 “their lords, who live openly an accursed life.” CHAP.  
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 In answer to this, it is stated, “that men are  
 “charged of God, by St. Peter and St. Paul,  
 “to be thus subject to wicked lords; and there-  
 “fore Christ paid tribute for himself, and his  
 “apostles, to the heathen emperors. Yet we  
 “read not that he, or any apostle, paid tithes to  
 “the wicked high priests, after the time that  
 “he began to preach.”<sup>10</sup>

But while it is thus certain that no sanction of popular violence could be fairly extracted from the political creed of the reformer, he knew that the relation subsisting between the governing and the governed involved mutual obligations. Hence, as the governed are cautioned against the evils of insubordination, and restricted to the use of rational and constitutional means in seeking the redress of grievances; the governing are reminded, that they are the recognised ministers of God in the use, and not in the abuse of their power—the extent in which they prove a terror to evil doers, and a praise to those who do well,

On the li-  
mits of ma-  
gisterial  
authority.

<sup>10</sup> MS. Of Servants and Lords; how each should keep his degree. This treatise, and the *Dialogus*, appeared about the same time. The following passage is a fair specimen of the reformer's manner in treating of social obligations as devolving on the important class of persons to which it is chiefly addressed. “If thou art a labourer live in meekness, and truly and cheerfully do thy labour, that if thy lord or thy master be a heathen man, he, by thy meekness, and cheerful and true service, may have nought to grudge against thee, nor to slander thy God nor Christendom.

“And to a christian lord, serve not with grudging, nor only in his presence, but truly, and cheerfully, and in his absence. And not only for worldly dread, or worldly reward, but for the fear of God and conscience, and a reward in heaven. For that God who appointeth thee to such service, knoweth which state is best for thee, and will reward thee more than all other lords may do if thou doest thy service truly and cheerfully for the sake of his ordinance.” MS. A Short Rule of Life, &c.

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being that of their real claims on the homage of the people. He therefore proceeds so far as to assert, that while by the force of some human institution, the name of king, prince, or lord, may be retained in favour of men who indulge in “wrongs and extortions,” such rulers are, in truth, “traitors to God, and to his people.” In noticing “how lords should live in their state,” he remarks that “first, they should know the law of God, and study it, and maintain it; that they should despise injustice, and maintain poor men in their right, to live in rest, and peace, and charity; and that they should suffer no man under colour of their authority to do extortion, to strike men, or to hold the poor from their right.”<sup>11</sup> Instead of abandoning themselves to sensual indulgence, they should be careful in their prosperity to emulate the patriarch, who could say, “when the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy. I was a father to the poor, and searched out the cause that I knew not, and brake the jaws of the wicked and drew the spoil from his teeth.”<sup>12</sup> In this manner “to withstand wrong and evil doers, and to help the poor, and fatherless, and motherless, and the widow, and the alien in their lordship,” would be “to govern themselves in their state as God ordained it, in great

<sup>11</sup> MS. Of Servants and Lords.

<sup>12</sup> Job, chap. xxiv.

“wisdom, and in might of men, and sufficiency  
 “of riches.”<sup>13</sup> And as civil government was  
 plainly instituted for these purposes, the magis-  
 trate who shall contravene, or neglect them, is  
 admonished that for this cause the providence of  
 God will very probably transfer his power, and  
 at no distant period, to hands of more fidelity.  
 The point, indeed, at which the wrongs of tyranny  
 may be innocently encountered by force, the re-  
 former has not attempted to define. It was to  
 imbibe the generous sentiments of much later  
 times, to treat the duties of civil rulers as things  
 which should be canvassed with the same freedom  
 as those of the people; and to regard the delin-  
 quencies of both as calling equally for reproof  
 and correction.

But in the fourteenth century, the doctrine of  
 Wycliffe as to the power of the magistrate with  
 regard to the church, was a much greater novelty  
 than any thing taught by him with respect to  
 secular government. We have seen that he re-  
 garded the clergy, as subject to the magistrate in  
 every thing affecting the social interests of the  
 laity; and that he considered the property of the  
 church, as in no way at the disposal of the pon-  
 tiff—but as held entirely of the crown, and as  
 liable, at the will of the sovereign, to its share in  
 the contributions required from the general re-  
 sources of the state. This, however, was not the  
 whole of the influence conceded by the reformer  
 to the civil government, with reference to the  
 national priesthood, and its vast possessions. To  
 the state, Wycliffe appealed for protection from

The obliga-  
 tions of the  
 magistrate  
 in relation  
 to the  
 church.

<sup>13</sup> MS. Of good Preaching Priests.

CHAP. the persecutions to which he was exposed from  
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 ————— the clergy. Despairing of such a change, as to emanate from that order, he insisted also that the labour of reforming the ecclesiastical establishment had become the duty of the magistrate. The ecclesiastics of the period are described as frequently “cursing the king, and his justices, “and officers, because they maintain the gospel, “and the true preachers thereof, and will not “punish them according to the wrongful commands of Antichrist and his clerks.” It is then inquired “Where are fouler heretics than these “worldly clerks, thus cursing true men, and “stirring up the king and his liege men to persecute Jesus Christ in his members, and to exile “the gospel out of our land?” “Sometimes,” he observes, “they succeed in persuading the king, “and lords, to torment the body of a just man, “over which Satan has no power, and to cast him “into a deep prison, as though he were some “sturdy thief, and all to make other men afraid “to stand forth on God’s part against their heresies.”<sup>14</sup> Exposing the abuse of spiritual censures, he thus adverts to the oppressions of the times. “If a true man displease a worldly “prelate, by teaching and maintaining the law of “God, he shall be slandered as a man in error, “and forbidden to preach the gospel of Christ; “and the people shall be charged on pain of the “greater curse to avoid him, and not to hear “such a man. And this shall be done under “the colour of holiness. For they will say, that “such a man teacheth heresy, and they will

<sup>14</sup> MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. xxiii.

“ bring many false witnesses and notaries in his  
 “ absence, while in his presence they speak not a  
 “ word. And for this they plead the false law,  
 “ that if three or four witnesses, though false, and  
 “ hired by money, say each a thing against a  
 “ true man, then he shall not himself be heard,  
 “ though he might prove the contrary by the wit-  
 “ nessing of two or three hundred.”<sup>15</sup> It is then  
 contended, that if such evidence may be regarded  
 as sufficient to justify the conduct of persecutors,  
 it would be easy to establish the innocence of  
 multitudes who have shed the blood of martyrs,  
 and even to vindicate the conduct of the men who  
 crucified the Saviour of the world. But while  
 these proceedings could not fail to excite his  
 sorrow and displeasure, he speaks of being sus-  
 tained by a consciousness that as the voice of  
 Elijah at length prevailed against that of eight  
 hundred false priests of Baal, so should the testi-  
 mony of one true man become triumphant over  
 a host of Cesarean prelates. Still to the re-  
 former it appeared as prudent, and just, that pro-  
 tection should be sought in all cases of clerical  
 persecution, from the bearer of the civil sword.  
 From the equity of the state, it was accordingly  
 solicited, “ that no priest, nor religious man in  
 “ our land, should be imprisoned without an open  
 “ trial, and true cause fully shewn to our king,  
 “ or to his proper council—and that christian men  
 “ give more credence to Christ’s gospel, and his  
 “ life, than to any bulls of the sinful bishops of

<sup>15</sup> MS. Of Prelates. This custom  
 was founded on the maxims of the  
 civil law. See Vol. I. Ch. i. p. 231, 232,

and Fortescue’s *De Laudibus*, with  
 Selden’s notes.

CHAP. "this world."<sup>16</sup> It is in the following language  
 VIII. that he contends for that liberty of prophesying, which has done so much for the institutions of this country, and the character of its people. "Worldly prelates command that no man should preach the gospel, but according to their will and limitation, and forbid men to hear the gospel on pain of the great curse. But Satan, in his own person, durst never do so much despite to Christ and to his gospel, for he alleged holy writ in tempting Christ, and thereby would have pursued his intent. And since it is the counsel and commandment of Christ to priests generally, that they preach the gospel, and as this they must not do without leave of prelates, who it may be are fiends of hell—it follows that priests may not do the commands of Christ, without the leave of fiends. Ah! Lord Jesus, are these sinful fools, and in some cases fiends of hell, more witty and mighty than thou, that true men may not do thy will, without authority from them? Ah! Lord God Almighty, all wise, and all full of

<sup>16</sup> MS. Of good Preaching Priests. Yet he remarks, "I would certainly that lords should wisely imprison those who are cursed of God for breaking his commandments, unless they would leave their false and needless swearing, and the frauds which they use each to the other." MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. 23. The twelfth chapter of his work, on Prelates, censures the conduct of bishops who fine, curse, and imprison men on account of religion, while they pardon the most notorious offenders on condition of their "paying a rent to Antichrist." Coer-

cion, it is observed, belongs to "lords' office, as Peter and Paul teacheth," and it is contended that the punishments affecting the body or the goods should proceed from that authority alone. In the fifteenth chapter of the same work he complains that the process of examination to which the Redeemer "God and man," and Paul "from the third heavens," submitted their doctrine, is abandoned by their professed disciples, who deem it sufficient to plead the infallibility of their church, and who persecute such as dissent from that dogma, and question the opinions it is cited to establish.

“ charity, how long wilt thou suffer these Anti-  
 “ christs to despise thee, and thy holy gospel, and —————  
 “ to prevent the health of the souls of christian  
 “ men? Lord of endless righteousness, this thou  
 “ sufferest, because of sin generally reigning  
 “ among the people; but of thine endless mercy  
 “ and goodness, help thy poor wretched priests  
 “ and servants, that they possess the love and  
 “ reverence of thy gospel, and be not hindered to  
 “ do thy worship and will by the false feignings of  
 “ Antichrist. Almighty Lord God, most merciful,  
 “ and in wisdom boundless, since thou sufferedst  
 “ Peter and all apostles to have so great fear and  
 “ cowardice at the time of thy passion, that they  
 “ flew all away for dread of death, and for a poor  
 “ woman’s voice; and since afterwards, by the  
 “ comfort of the Holy Ghost, thou madest them  
 “ so strong that they were afraid of no man, nor  
 “ of pain, nor death; help now, by gifts of the  
 “ same Spirit, thy poor servants, who all their life  
 “ have been cowards, and make them strong, and  
 “ bold in thy cause, to maintain the gospel against  
 “ Antichrist, and the tyrants of this world.”<sup>17</sup>

With so much energy, and with these devout aspirations, did the reformer contend for the unfettered ministration of the gospel. Nor is there room to charge him with claiming a freedom in this particular, which he would not have conceded to others. His invectives, indeed, are often violent; but when recommending his most severe chastisement of the men who had done most to destroy the purity of the christian faith, the clause

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<sup>17</sup> MS. Of Prelates, c. vii. p. 77. Similar sentiments are expressed in several other chapters of this work.

especially in xv. xvi. xxi. xxvi. xxvii. xxviii. See also Homilies, Bib. Reg. pp. 129, 137, 135.



CHAP. "sparing their persons," is of very frequent oc-  
 VIII. currence.<sup>18</sup> On this point, as on many others,  
 his opinions belong not to the age in which he  
 lived. To attempt the conversion of a spiritual  
 offender, by the same measures which heathens  
 employ to correct their thieves, is condemned by  
 him as equally opposed to sound reason, and to  
 the letter and spirit of the gospel. Hence, the  
 extent of the reformation which he proposed, in  
 this respect, was "that none of the clergy be hin-  
 "dered from keeping truly and freely the gospel  
 "of Christ, in devout living, and true teaching, on  
 "account of any feigned privilege or tradition;"<sup>19</sup>  
 and also that the revenues of that order should be  
 limited to the means of a decent maintenance, and  
 to such persons among them, as were free from  
 the vices by which the sanctity of their profession  
 had been so commonly degraded.

To extend this protection to devout men, and  
 to effect this momentous revolution with respect  
 to the property of the hierarchy, and the cha-  
 racter of its ministers, is declared to be the pro-  
 vince of the magistrate. To neglect this great work,  
 under existing circumstances, must be at the  
 peril of his soul. "Think ye, lords, and mighty  
 "men, who support priests, how fearful it is to  
 "maintain worldly priests in their lusts, who  
 "neither know good nor will learn it, nor will live  
 "as holy men in this order. For ye may lightly  
 "amend them, by only telling them that ye will  
 "not support them but as they do their duty,  
 "live well, and preach the gospel. Then, indeed,  
 "they would certainly do this. And think ye,

<sup>18</sup> Hom. Bib. Reg. pp. 103, 114. Parliamentum, and elsewhere.  
 Objections to Freres. Ad Regem et

<sup>19</sup> MS. Of good Preaching Priests.

“ great men, were not this a thousand-fold better, CHAP.  
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 “ than to conquer all the world? Hereby there  
 “ should be no more cost to you, nor travail, but  
 “ honour to God, and endless good to yourselves,  
 “ to priests, and to all Christendom. God for his  
 “ endless mercy, and charity, bring this holy end,  
 “ Amen.”<sup>20</sup> In another tract he writes, “ Kings  
 “ and lords should know, that they are ministers  
 “ and vicars of God, to avenge sin, and punish  
 “ misdoers, and to praise the good, as Peter and  
 “ Paul say. Also Paul saith, that not only men  
 “ who do sin are worthy of death, but they who  
 “ consent to it. Since lords, then, may amend  
 “ the great sins of pride, covetousness, extortion,  
 “ and simony among clerks, they are condemned  
 “ with the sinners themselves unless they do it—  
 “ cursed of God for breaking of his laws, and  
 “ because they love not Jesus Christ. And be-  
 “ cause adversities and wars come on account of  
 “ sins reigning, and not amended, lords should  
 “ have neither respite, nor peace, until these sins  
 “ are done away. For no man thus withstanding  
 “ the law of God shall have peace so long as  
 “ lords have their lordships of God, to destroy  
 “ sin, and to maintain righteousness and holiness  
 “ of life. If then, they pay not to God this rent,  
 “ well should they know, that God must punish  
 “ them as he teacheth in his word. And if lords  
 “ do well this office, they come securely to the  
 “ bliss of heaven.”<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> MS. For the Order of Priesthood.

<sup>21</sup> MS. For three Skills Lords should constrain Priests, &c. That Wycliffe was a zealous advocate of the rights of the crown, as opposed to all secular

independence in the clergy, has been always sufficiently understood. But the real extent of the magistrates' obligations with regard to the church, and especially with regard to the

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On the cus-  
tom of pa-  
tronage.

It was not, however, the intention of the reformer, that the rights of patronage should be invaded by the state, any more than by the court of Rome; though from the thirtieth year of his age, he ceased not to complain of the worldly purposes to which patrons had too commonly applied their influence. In one of his later treatises he observes, that an idiot is often called to be “a vicar, or parish priest, who cannot do, “and who may not learn to do, the office of a “good curate. Yet the poor parish provideth “for him, and no tongue in this world may tell “what sin and wrong cometh hereby.” The rulers of the nation, and the patrons of livings, are accordingly exhorted, if they would perform their duty as guardians of the best interests of the kingdom, to separate all churchmen from worldly offices, and from the snares of wealth. “By this means the poor commons would be “discharged of many heavy rents, and wicked “customs, brought in by covetous clerks, and of “many tallages and extortions, by which they “are now yearly pillaged. And thus by restoring “lordships to secular men, as is due by holy “writ; and by reducing the clergy to meekness “and wilful poverty, and ghostly travail, as lived “Christ and his apostles, sin should be destroyed

patronage or the correction of religious opinion, are points on which the sentiments of the reformer remained to be known. It is evident, that if his scheme did not leave all such opinions to find their level by the force of pure reason and persuasion, it did more in this way, than the practice of any of the parties ascendant in this country before the latter half of the seventeenth

century. Even the mendicants, whose character and doctrine, according to his own account, could hardly have become worse, were not to suffer in “their persons.” His confidence in the force of truth, evidently rendered him suspicious as to the utility of all other force in religious matters. Note to the second edition.

“ in each degree of holy church, and holiness of  
 “ life brought in, and secular laws strengthened, — CHAP.  
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 “ and the poor commons aided, and good govern-  
 “ ment, both spiritual and temporal, come again.”  
 To guard the mind of the laity against those spir-  
 itual terrors, which would certainly be employed  
 to prevent these changes, he observes, that the  
 more informed among them knew, “ that though  
 “ all the clergy on earth should curse them, yet,  
 “ forasmuch as they labour with a clean con-  
 “ science, to bring the clergy to that holy life  
 “ which is exemplated and commanded by Christ;  
 “ and to restore secular lordships to secular men,  
 “ as they should by the law of God; that for this  
 “ righteous doing, God and all angels and saints  
 “ will bless them. And then the curse of man  
 “ can harm nothing, no, nor interdict, nor any  
 “ censure which Satan may feign. Almighty  
 “ God, stir our clerks, our lords, and our com-  
 “ mons, to maintain the rightful ordinance of  
 “ Jesus Christ, and to fear the curse of God, and  
 “ not the curse of Antichrist; and to desire  
 “ speedily the honour of God, and the bliss of  
 “ heaven, more than their own honour and  
 “ worldly joy. Amen!”<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> MS. For three Skills Lords should constrain Priests, &c. The guilt of spiritual treason is said to be incurred by “ lords and ladies who hold curates in “ worldly offices from the souls of “ which they have the care. For God “ giveth them lordship and presenta- “ tion of churches, to maintain his “ law, and to help true priests in the “ preaching of the gospel. And if “ they withhold curates, who are “ God’s treasure, in their worldly ser- “ vice, or in their chapels, or prevent

“ their watching over christian souls, “ which Christ bought with his own “ precious blood, they are foul traitors “ to Jesus Christ, and to the people “ whom they thus destroy.” MS. Of Prelates, chap. iv. The doctrine of Wycliffe with respect to patronage may have been inferred from his work intitled “ Why poor Priests have no “ Benefices,” and from a few other passages; but if any effort has been made to ascertain his general language on this point, the result has never been

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On the custom of tithes and the effect of ecclesiastical endowments.

It should be noticed also, as a circumstance which has exposed the name of the reformer to some reproach, that he ventured to speak even of tithes, as a mode of contribution for which no divine authority could now be pleaded. That sanction, it was acknowledged, had been connected with this custom under the Mosaic economy; but it was assumed, that both the ritual and the polity of that dispensation had passed away, leaving "its moral" only, as binding on the church in these better times. So often too had his spirit been grieved on witnessing the force employed through a parish or a province, to enrich a profligate clergy, that while inculcating most emphatically the duty of the instructed to provide for their spiritual teachers, he was ever ready to avow it as his doctrine, that where the priest failed notoriously in his office, the obligation to any kind of contribution on the part of the people was dissolved. In such cases, the clergy might resort to spiritual censures, or enforce their demands by the aids of the civil power; but in so doing, they were said to follow the customs of the world, more than the example of Christ, or the maxims of the gospel. The third chapter of his treatise on "Clerks-Possessioners," is commenced by describing the persons so named, as "traitors to God, to lords, and to the common people." To the first, by deserting his law in favour of human devices; to the second, by

publicly stated. This was important to be done, not only because the reformer abandoned many of his earlier opinions at the close of life, but because he certainly adopted some

notions on the matter of clerical revenue, which, if they did not go to destroy the system of patronage, went necessarily to effect a serious modification of it. Note to the second edition.

placing them under an anathema except they <sup>CHAP. VIII.</sup> forego their duty, and become the patrons of corruption; and to the third, by deceiving them in many ways, but especially by “teaching them “openly that they shall have God’s blessing, and “the bliss of heaven, if they pay truly their “tithes and offerings.”<sup>23</sup> To destroy this artifice, which he knew to be too successfully imposed on the people, the reformer thus writes: “True, “men say, that prelates are more bound to “preach truly the gospel, than their subjects are “to pay them dymes; for God chargeth that “more, and it is more profitable to both parties. “Prelates, therefore, are more accursed who “cease from this preaching, than are their sub- “jects who cease to pay tithes even while their “prelates do their office well.”<sup>24</sup> Instead of extorting such tribute from the poor among the people, their influence should be employed in promoting their edification, and in disposing the opulent and the powerful to befriend them. Such, it is stated, was the manner of St. Paul. And those who “find priests” are farther exhorted “to do their alms for the love of God, and for “the help of their souls, and for the help of chris- “tian men.” They are also admonished, that in providing for men averse to these spiritual services, they must become partakers of their sins.”<sup>25</sup> Nor need they fear the consequences of withholding their sanction from the character of such teachers, since the pontiff had himself commanded the people to separate from a priest

<sup>23</sup> MS. C. C. C. Cambridge.<sup>25</sup> MS. How Men should find Priests.<sup>24</sup> MS. Of Prelates.

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who should refuse to put away a wedded wife; and it surely was not to be disputed, that there were sins quite as much at variance with the sanctity of the priestly calling, as the contract of marriage.<sup>26</sup> Hence it is required, "that the  
" clergy of our land be restrained from pride, and  
" glorious array, and worldly occupation. And  
" particularly, that our prelates and curates be  
" charged by the king and lords to teach their  
" people well, both by the example of a good  
" life, and by a free and true preaching of the  
" gospel, and that they do this as busily and  
" readily as they seek their tithes."<sup>27</sup> It is presumed, that in such cases no difficulty would be felt in securing that portion of tribute. The times were evil, but we must suppose that observation and experience had led the reformer to this conclusion.<sup>28</sup> Where the moral claim failed through vice or negligence on the part of the priest, an appeal to the sword of the magistrate, "and strong  
" curses against men's good will," is said to have no other tendency than to irritate the laity, and to frustrate every design of the pastoral relation. Such measures were viewed as effacing the im-

<sup>26</sup> MS. How Prayers of good Men helpeth much, &c. &c.

<sup>27</sup> MS. Of good Preaching Priests.

<sup>28</sup> His doctrine with respect to ecclesiastical endowments and tithes, is introduced in his sermons quite as frequently as in his other works. See 102, 125, 134. "And therefore say  
" many prelates, that no man who  
" hath a cure, should live but on God's  
" part, as on dymes and offerings;  
" and so by pure title of alms should  
" they have the goods which they  
" have. For thus lived Christ the

" highest pope. And who art thou  
" that wilt not live thus? Wouldst  
" thou be greater than Christ who is  
" Lord of all the world?" Such offerings, however, on the part of the people, are said to be as binding as any other form of debt. It is at the same time demanded, "For what  
" reason should he have dymes and  
" offerings of the people who liveth in  
" lust and idleness and profiteth not  
" to his people? Certainly such law  
" must be of the fiend." Ibid. 156.



portant difference which had been placed between the authority of the magistrate and that pertaining to the christian shepherd. According to "reason and scripture" the former might thus enforce his decisions; "but by the gospel, and the life of Christ, and of his apostles, priests have no such power to constrain men to pay their dymes. Especially, while they do not their spiritual office, but harm men by false teaching and evil example. But even though they did their office well, and men would not pay them tithes, still they should not curse men, but rather suffer meekly as did Jesus Christ."<sup>29</sup>

The following passage presents a fair specimen of his frequent reasoning on this subject. "Men wonder greatly why curates are so unfeeling to the people in taking tithes, since Christ and his apostles took none, as men now take them, neither paid them, nor spake of them either in the gospel or in the epistles—the perfect law of freedom and of grace. But Christ lived on the alms of Mary Magdalene, and of other holy women, as the gospel telleth. And apostles lived sometimes by the labour of their hands, and sometimes accepted a poor livelihood and clothing, given by the people in free

<sup>29</sup> MS. How religious Men should keep certain Articles. In a MS. of the Bodleian entitled *Vita Sacerdotum*, "the foul indowing of the church" is described as having "always harmed clerks and lords and commons." It is contended that the taught should minister freely to every real need of their instructors, but it is observed that "when the apostles strove which

"should be greatest, Christ of his great wisdom declared his doubt, and said there are two lordships, temporal, and spiritual. The first falls to the kings and lords of this world, and in no way to priests, who are on Christ's side." This is also the substance of the seventeenth chapter in the fourth book of his *Triologus*.

CHAP. " will and devotion, without asking or con-  
 VIII. straining. And to this end Christ said to his  
 " disciples, that they should eat and drink such  
 " things as were set before them, and take nei-  
 " ther gold nor silver for their preaching, or their  
 " giving of sacraments. And Paul giving a ge-  
 " neral rule for priests, saith thus ; ' We having  
 " food and clothing, with these things be we  
 " content in Christ Jesus.' Paul also proved  
 " that priests who preach the gospel truly, should  
 " live by the gospel, and of tithes he said no  
 " more. True, it is, that tithes were due to  
 " priests and deacons in the old law ; and so  
 " bodily circumcision was then needful to all  
 " men, but it is not so now, under the law of  
 " grace. Christ, however, was circumcised, and  
 " yet we read not where he took tithes as we  
 " do ; nor do we read in all the gospels, that  
 " he paid them to the high - priest, or bade  
 " any other man to do so. Lord, why should  
 " our worldly clergy claim tithes and offerings  
 " and customs from christian people more than  
 " did Christ and his apostles, and even more than  
 " men were burdened with under the law ?  
 " Then, all priests, and deacons, and officers of  
 " the temple were maintained by tithes and  
 " offerings alone, having no other lordship. But  
 " now some worldly priest, who is more un-  
 " able than others, by virtue of a bull of Anti-  
 " christ, shall have all the tithes and offerings  
 " to himself."<sup>30</sup>

The readiness with which churchmen appealed to the Old Testament, to prove the divine origin

<sup>30</sup> MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. xviii.

of tithes, was frequently thus retorted upon them by our reformer. If the authority of the levitical law might be justly pleaded, as vesting them with their claim to a tenth of whatever the soil produced; consistency required, that the estates and the worldly offices of the clergy should be wholly relinquished, since these were things that could not be associated with the priestly character as sustained by the descendants of Levi. In the same spirit, it is remarked, that "they take not tithes and offerings by the form of the Old Testament; that is, parting them in common to all the priests and ministers of the church. Nor according to the form of the gospel; that is, taking a simple livelihood, given without compulsion, by the free devotion of the people; but they take them according to a new law of sinful men, one priest challenging to himself all the tithes of a great country."<sup>31</sup> The diversity of customs, also, which prevailed in connexion with this mode of providing for the ministers of religion, was supposed to imply the want of some definite or authoritative law. If tithes were due, he observes, "by God's commandment, then every where in Christendom, there should be one mode of tithing."<sup>32</sup> Thus

<sup>31</sup> MS. How the Office of Curates is ordained of God.

<sup>32</sup> MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. xviii. The reader will perceive from the following extract, that the change which the reformer contemplated in the ecclesiastical state, though affirmed to be necessary, was one which he would have to result from the gravest attention to the many questions which it involved. "Would

"God," he exclaims, "that all wise and true men would enquire whether it were not better for to find priests by the free alms of the people, and in a reasonable livelihood, that they may teach the gospel in word and deed, as did Christ and his apostles, than thus to pay tithes as men are now constrained by a new ordinance of priests, to a worldly priesthood, ignorant and negligent." He pre-

CHAP. VIII. the estates of the clergy, the reformer would have restored to the hands of the laity, as the means of promoting the general interests of the community, and especially of providing for the poor. The contributions by the people to the clergy, he would have limited to voluntary offerings, so restricting that order in the use even of such offerings, that whatever might remain after their real wants should be supplied, might minister to the relief of the necessitous in their respective flocks.<sup>33</sup>

sently adds, that "if this first ordinance of Christ and his apostles come again to Christendom, then shall Christ's people be free to withhold their tithes and offerings from wayward priests, and no more maintain them in sin." To be thus free, and yet to provide "a reasonable livelihood for good priests, were much better and easier, both for priests and commoners, for this world and the next." Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Mr. Lewis is evidently much perplexed with this part of Wycliffe's doctrine, and has so treated it that it is difficult to learn from his pages, what the reformer really taught concerning church revenue, or what his biographer considered him as teaching. Wycliffe's enemies charge him with asserting, that "it is not lawful for priests to have any *property*," and that tithes moreover are "mere *alms*, and ought to be paid to none but those who teach and do their office." Mr. Lewis applies himself to account for these calumnies, and to refute them. But understanding the word *property*, as I presume we ought to do, as meaning estates possessed by the clergy as such; and by the word *alms*, voluntary contributions, as opposed to an extorted revenue, these accusations are certainly true, and are rather con-

firmed than confuted by the passages which his biographer has adduced from his writings. Mr. Lewis has quoted Cowell's Interpreter, a work founded on the worst principles of the civil law, as showing that all the property of the realm belongs to the king, and from this legal fiction he has descended to infer that Wycliffe might have said in truth, that the clergy ought not to have any property! In fact, Mr. Lewis's whole manner of treating this subject is unworthy of his general candour, and if it does not amount to a concealment of the truth, it is certainly very like that of a man who is concerned to soften it. He certainly does not state the true doctrine of the reformer. Whether this resulted from his not knowing it, or from his suppressing it, or in some degree from both these causes, I presume not to judge. He concludes with affirming, that Wycliffe never taught that tithes might "be detained by the parishioners, and bestowed where they will at their pleasure," adding that this liberty was restricted "to cases limited by law." But if by bestowing tithes according to their *pleasure*, he meant bestowing them according to their *conscience*, which no doubt is the thing intended, the statement is untrue. And if by cases

And novel as these opinions may appear on the first view of them, it was not in the strictest consistency that they were denounced either as erroneous or heretical by the partisans of Rome. For what were the maxims which had conferred so much honour on the monastic and mendicant fraternities? Were they not those which regarded seclusion from worldly occupation, and separation from luxurious opulence, as a species of discipline eminently favourable to the increase of devotion? The law of celibacy had contributed much to augment the influence of the more ancient clergy, by exhibiting them as an order of men more self-denying, and more devoted than the laity; and it is well known, that the religious had long rendered themselves the object of a much deeper veneration, by connecting with that article of restraint, their vows of peculiar poverty, and of separation from the vain and distracting employments which relate to this world. The principle involved in all this, did not escape the reformer's observation; and in his case, it was not enough to applaud the sanctity of such rules, merely as exemplified in others. He ventured to call on the members of that order with which he stood immediately connected, even on the most dignified among them, to show their sincerity, by conforming themselves at once to the requirements of a scheme which they professed so greatly to admire. By

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The principle of the reformer's theory derived in part from the existing system.

limited by law he meant such cases only as are limited by the law of the church, or by the law of the land, this statement is equally incorrect. The reformer not only taught that there was an authority in "the law of Christ"

with respect to such matters, but that the authority of that law was supreme. He may not have judged wisely in this, but such was his doctrine.—Note to the second edition.

CHAP. associating something of the severity of the  
VIII. cloister with their own vocation, the uses of the religious in the ecclesiastical state would be superseded, and all the reputation which had been obtained by such men, might be thus thrown into the scale of the parochial priesthood. Such is the bold theory to which the reformer challenged the attention of all churchmen, and of the rulers of Christendom. Its language was simply this. It is affirmed, that to reduce the clergy to that state with respect to property, which in the age of the apostles was never felt as a disgrace; and that to exclude them from all secular offices, though sanctioned by the same example; would be to annihilate their influence, and so to bring upon the world the last of evils. But let it be remembered by the persons who reason thus, that they have long agreed to render their most profound homage to the men who are distinguished by their professed adherence to these primitive models of devotedness. Nothing is now required, save that the maxims which these same persons have so variously declared to have most of heaven in them, and which they know to be favourable to the greatest influence on earth, be allowed to form their own character, and to regulate their own conduct. Let them connect a poverty less equivocal than that of the mendicant, and a spirituality less suspicious than that of the monk, with a zealous discharge of their proper duties, and the only result to be anticipated, is the exclusion of those intruders from the established system, and the return of their own order to that kind of ascendancy, which

was the beauty of the primitive church, and was then found to be fraught with every blessing to the shepherd and the flock. CHAP. VIII.

The wisdom or the folly of this doctrine, and of the reasoning employed to sustain it, is left to the judgment of the reader; but integrity requires that both should be here distinctly stated. It is certain that the changes thus urged, were by no means the consequence of a defective reverence for the clerical office. In the language of Wycliffe, “ Good priests, who live well, in purity of thought, and speech, and deed, and in good example to the people, who teach the law of God up to their knowledge, and labour fast, night and day, to learn it better, and teach it openly and constantly, these are very prophets of God, and holy angels of God, and the spiritual lights of the world! Thus saith God, by his prophets, and Jesus Christ in his gospel, and saints declare it well, by authority and reason. Think then, ye priests, on this noble office, and honour it, and do it cheerfully, according to your knowledge, and your power!”<sup>34</sup>

But in the place of such men, he saw a multitude who, while professing to be the ministers of the Saviour’s spiritual kingdom, possessed half the property of the realm; and who, in proportion to their wealth, were found to operate as the chief barrier in the way of every attempt to restore religion to its purity. These persons are described as “ more busy about worldly goods, than about virtues, and the good keeping of the

His reverence of the priestly office.

His judgment respecting the clergy of his time.

<sup>34</sup> MS. For the Order of Priesthood.



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“souls of men. For he who can best get the riches of the world together, and hold a great household and worldly array, is deemed a worthy man of holy church, though of the gospel he shall not know the least point. Such a man shall be full in favour and office with the bishop. But that curate who giveth himself to study holy writ, and to teach his parishioners to save their souls, and who liveth in meekness and penance, and busy travailling in spiritual things, seeking nought of worldly worship or riches; is holden a fool, and a disturber of holy church, and is despised and persecuted of high-priests and prelates, and their officers, and hated by other curates in the country. It is this, too, that maketh many curates to be negligent in their ghostly charge, and to give themselves to the occupation and the business of the world. But such curates think full little how dearly Christ bought man’s soul with his own precious blood and death, and how hard a reckoning he shall make for these souls at doomsday. Certainly it seemeth that they are out of the faith of christian men. For they make not themselves ready to come, and well to answer how they came into their benefices, and how they have lived and taught, and how they have spent the goods of poor men. Had they a christian man’s faith ready in their mind, they would begin a better life, and therein continue.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, while the guilt of the laity, in favouring the corruptions of the hierarchy, or in allowing them to exist, is described as exposing

<sup>35</sup> MS. How the Office of Curates is ordained of God.

them to the displeasure of Heaven, their offence is regarded as trivial, when compared with that of the clergy. That body of men, in submitting to become thus estranged from the spiritualities of their office, and in contributing by their example to diffuse impiety, and all the elements of political disorder, through the nation, are loudly admonished, that the alternative immediately before them is reform or ruin. The remedy which Wycliffe proposed, we have seen; and the facts to which he adverts, will serve to explain the severity that marks certain of its features.

Those who despise the will of the dead, are said to be "cursed solemnly of God and man." But Jesus Christ, in his testament, bequeathed to his disciples, and their successors, peace in "themselves, and in this world tribulation, and "persecution for his word. But worldly clerks "have foully broken this good testament of "Jesus Christ. For they seek the peace and "the prosperity of this world; peace with the "fiend and with the flesh, and will endure no "labour in keeping or teaching the truth of God; "but rather persecute good men who would "teach it, and so make war upon Christ in his "people to obtain the worldly things which "Christ forbid to their order. In the life of "Christ in his gospel, which is his testament, in "the life also and teaching of his apostles, our "clerks may find nothing but poverty, meekness, "ghostly toil, and contempt from worldly men "on account of reproving their sin, their reward "being in heaven, through their pure life, and "true teaching, and cheerful suffering of death.

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“ Hence Jesus Christ was so poor in this life,  
“ that by worldly title he had no house to rest  
“ his head, as he himself saith in the gospel.  
“ And St. Peter was so poor that he had neither  
“ silver nor gold to give a poor crippled man, as  
“ is witnessed in the book of the apostles’ deeds.  
“ St. Paul, also, was so poor in this world’s  
“ goods, that he laboured with his hands for a  
“ livelihood, and that of his fellows, and suffered  
“ much persecution, and watchfulness, and great  
“ thought for all the churches, as he himself  
“ saith in many places of holy writ. And St.  
“ Bernard writeth to the pope, that in his worldly  
“ array, and plenty of gold and silver, and lands,  
“ he is a successor of Constantine the emperor,  
“ and not of Jesus Christ, and his disciples.  
“ Jesus also saith, on confirming this testament,  
“ after rising from the dead, ‘ As my Father hath  
“ sent me, so I send you,’ that is, to labour, and  
“ persecution, and poverty, and hunger, and  
“ martyrdom !”<sup>36</sup>

It is sufficiently evident, that the prominence thus given by our reformer to the self-denial imposed on the pastors of the primitive church, arose from the disgust excited by the very opposite practices of the contemporary clergy. The following extract, will somewhat farther explain the process of reflection, by which Wycliffe passed to his stern conclusions on the important questions under review. “ True teaching is the debt most  
“ due to holy church, and is most charged of  
“ God, and most profitable to christian souls.  
“ As much, therefore, as God’s word, and the

<sup>36</sup> MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. xiv.

“ bliss of heaven in the souls of men, are better  
 “ than earthly goods ; so much are these worldly  
 “ prelates, who withdraw the great debt of holy  
 “ teaching, worse than thieves ; more accursedly  
 “ sacrilegious than ordinary plunderers, who  
 “ break into churches, and steal thence chalices,  
 “ and vestments, or never so much gold.”<sup>37</sup> The  
 christianity supported by such men, he often  
 describes as a libel on the exalted Being whose  
 name is given to it. For, he observes, if it be  
 “ a great sin to witness falsely against a common  
 “ man, it is more to do thus against a holy man,  
 “ and most of all so to do with the name of  
 “ Christ, the Head of all saints, and the Lord of  
 “ all lords ! Also, if it be a great sin to lie, and  
 “ to defraud men of temporal goods, it is more  
 “ to deprive them of spiritual good, as of virtues  
 “ and a moral life ; but most of all to deprive  
 “ them of faith, and of the mirror of Christ’s life,  
 “ which is the ground of all well-being here-  
 “ after.”<sup>38</sup> The existing clergy, therefore, as  
 having grossly betrayed the most important of all  
 trusts, are denounced as the most guilty portion  
 of mankind. On the ground of this fact, which  
 is presumed to be demonstrated on the authority  
 of scripture, and on that of the most illustrious  
 examples, the magistrate is called upon to sepa-  
 rate the sacred order from those incentives to  
 covetousness and ambition which had mainly  
 contributed to these appalling results.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Sentence of the Curse Expounded,  
c. ii.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. c. ix.

<sup>39</sup> In his work *On Prelates* he re-  
marks “ that many of their sins are so

“ open that it needeth no more should  
 “ be declared of them. But of lechery  
 “ men say that prelates are full thereof,  
 “ and of the most cursed species of it.  
 “ Such, indeed, as it is a shame to

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It must be remembered, that the doctrine of our reformer, which thus severed all endowments from the ecclesiastical establishments, is not only opposed to the practice of the church of Rome, and of the church of England, but to that of almost every sect in protestant Christendom. It is true, in describing the custom of tithing as being in these later ages merely the institution of man, he would only utter the sentiment of multitudes, who have still regarded that branch of ecclesiastical polity, as in every view just, and as eminently useful. But in asserting that whatever the assessment of the civil power might be, the voluntary offerings of the people should form the only revenue of the christian priesthood, he was understood, and will perhaps be still understood, as exposing christianity itself to the last degree of peril. It is certain, however, that no purpose was farther from his mind. Had there existed a man in that age capable of reasoning on such matters with the calmness and intelligence of Dr. Paley, it is not difficult to conceive what the reply of our reformer would have been. It might have been urged upon him, that christianity is a religion which in its evidences, and in much of its doctrine, has to do with languages no longer spoken, and with laws and customs which have long since passed into oblivion. That, accordingly, it should be the province, and the sole province, of an order of men, to preserve its documents, to vindicate its claims, and to enforce its truths. To this, it might have been added, that a

“ know, much more to do. And so  
“ curates take example of them, and  
“ the people take example of their

“ curates, both wedded men and sin-  
“ gle.”—MS. c. ix.

legal provision for the support of such persons is strictly necessary to their existence, as an order ; since apart from such a provision, the leisure requisite to their vocation could not be secured, nor those circumstances of independence which are so necessary to a faithful discharge of clerical duty.<sup>40</sup>

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In reply to such statements, it would have been remarked by Wycliffe, that the necessity of the order of men adverted to, and the necessity of such men for the purposes named, it had never occurred to him to doubt. So far from this, his complaint had long been, that the clergy were not more adequately prepared for the performance of such duties, and more completely separated from all such employments, as might prevent their most efficient attention to them. To the producing of such men, schools, like that in which the youth and vigour of his days had passed, would be deemed fully competent—supposing them to possess their proper liberties, and to be suitably encouraged by the civil power. It would have been at once conceded, that among the persons aspiring to the office of churchmen, many would relinquish their object, if assured that their support must arise solely from the free-will offerings of the people. But this loss the reformer would have described as more apparent than real. He would not have hesitated to affirm, that should this policy be the means of reducing the clergy to one-third of their present number, the change must be fraught with benefits too great to be ascertained, if that third should only

Summary of  
his doctrine  
respecting  
the civil  
establish-  
ment of  
christianity  
and clerical  
revenue.

<sup>40</sup> Moral Philosophy, ii. 305—313.

CHAP. bring with them the true spirit of their office.  
 VIII.

So long as the parish priest adhered to the law of celibacy, it was but little he could really need, and that little, it was supposed, might in general be obtained, by every devout man, without the remotest sacrifice of independence. On these principles the reformer had acted as rector of Lutterworth; they were also the law of his poor priests; and it was accordingly from experiment, that he was prepared to assert, that neither priest nor prelate needed to distrust them, if careful to cherish the temper, and to maintain the deportment, becoming their profession.

His language, therefore, in brief was, “ let the  
 “ parochial boundaries in the ecclesiastical state  
 “ remain: let the present system of patronage  
 “ continue undisturbed: but let the men intro-  
 “ duced to the care of souls, in such places, re-  
 “ member how it was with their predecessors in  
 “ the years before Constantine, with the Master  
 “ whose name they bear, and with the apostles,  
 “ whom they esteem it their honour to succeed.  
 “ As thus appointed, let what they solicit from  
 “ the magistrate be simply protection; and to  
 “ meet the evils arising from the withholding of  
 “ settled pastors from the established cures, and  
 “ the many which must be inseparable from the  
 “ appointment of improper men, let such priests  
 “ as may prefer the labours of the evangelist to  
 “ the more regular duties of the parochial shep-  
 “ herd, be allowed to act upon that preference,  
 “ regulating their steps, in all things, by the  
 “ necessities of the people, and the prospects of  
 “ usefulness.”



His object, therefore, evidently was, to preserve the machinery of a religious establishment, but to preserve it subject to the action of so much external influence as might serve to counteract its necessary tendencies to inertness and decay. Such is the general state of things in this country at the present hour. And the reformer's theory, it will be seen, is scarcely more at variance with the maxims of the present church of England, than with those of the many who have deserted her pale. The positions, however, regarded by either party as erroneous, if fairly examined, will be found to have arisen, in most instances, from a too favourable judgment of human nature; and it is hoped that the same charitable feeling will have its place in the mind of the reader, when forming his estimate of the character of Wycliffe, as connected with these much disputed questions.

While the reformer is found thus assailing the more acknowledged sources of clerical opulence, it will be anticipated, that such modes of exaction as had been discountenanced by synods and councils, would call forth his loudest censure. Simony, in the language of the age, consisted in the extorting of money as the price of discharging any spiritual function, as well as in the purchase of the livings of the church. Against these evils, which were sometimes most oppressive, the clergy frequently entered their protest in their solemn assemblies, but they generally returned to their respective cures, each to indulge in the vice which the whole had affected to renounce. "If any poor man," the reformer writes, "shall utter the truth of holy writ against the tyranny

CHAP. “ of Antichrist and his officers, nought else follows  
 VIII. “ but to curse him, to imprison him, to burn and  
 “ slay him, and that without hearing his defence.  
 “ It seemeth that John’s prophecy in the Apoca-  
 “ lypse is now fulfilled, when no man shall be  
 “ hardy enough to buy or sell, without wearing  
 “ the mark of the beast. For now no man shall  
 “ do aught in the church without these false bulls  
 “ of Antichrist, none looking for their reward to  
 “ the honouring of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy  
 “ Spirit, in the souls of men.”<sup>41</sup> Men are there-  
 fore said to have become an article of merchandise,  
 in common with the brute. But it is required,  
 “ that the cursed heresy of simony in the clergy  
 “ be destroyed, both in benefices, orders, sacra-  
 “ ments, and pardons.” It is also stated, that  
 “ whoever doeth most simony, and maintaineth  
 “ most sin, should be judged, known, and treated  
 “ as most a heretic, as most the adversary of  
 “ Jesus Christ, and as Antichrist.”<sup>42</sup> So gainful,  
 however, had the matter of indulgences become  
 to certain bishops, that should their life extend to  
 twenty years, it was ascertained, that the receipts  
 of each from the sale of such articles alone, must  
 amount to sixty thousand marks. “ And thus,”  
 he feelingly exclaims, “ these wicked prelates  
 “ sell the souls of christian men to Satan for  
 “ money, souls for which Christ shed his precious  
 “ heart’s blood upon the cross!”<sup>43</sup> Hence, it is  
 demanded, “ that the ravening and extortions of  
 “ prelates, and of their officers, which they do  
 “ under the colour of jurisdiction and alms, and

<sup>41</sup> MS. Sentence of the Curse Ex-  
 pounded, c. x. xvi.

<sup>42</sup> MS. Of good Preaching Priests.

<sup>43</sup> MS. On Prelates.

“ their maintaining of sin for the sake of an annual  
 “ rent, be wisely and truly stopped, and that they  
 “ be well chastised for thus robbing of the king’s  
 “ liege men.”<sup>44</sup> But while the native clergy are  
 thus guilty, in this respect, “ the simony of the  
 “ court of Rome does most harm, for it is most  
 “ common, and done most under the colour of  
 “ holiness, and robbeth most our land both of  
 “ men and treasure.” In describing the en-  
 croachments of papal avarice, he remarks, “ when  
 “ a lord receives the gold for presenting to a  
 “ benefice, the gold dwelleth still in the land, but  
 “ when the pope hath the first-fruits, the gold  
 “ goeth out, and cometh never again. And as  
 “ for pardons, if they be aught worth, they must  
 “ be free ; and to take money for them, is to sell  
 “ the goods of grace, and therefore simony.”  
 The guilty are then reminded of the leprosy  
 which fell on Gehazi, and of the anathema pro-  
 nounced by St. Peter on Simon Magus ; while  
 “ kings and lords” are said to be “ charged of  
 “ God to destroy this sin, and others ; and if  
 “ they do it not, they are consenters and fauters  
 “ thereof.”<sup>45</sup>

But it will be remembered, that in instances where the temporal power of the pope was the matter of debate, and where many an exaction

On the spi-  
ritual power  
of the pope.

<sup>44</sup> MS. Of good Preaching Priests.

<sup>45</sup> MS. On Prelates. From Mr. Lewis’s account of this evil, it would seem that the reformer’s complaints respecting it referred mainly, if not entirely, to certain fees which were extorted from the junier clergy at ordination, and which at the most do not appear to have amounted to more than

two shillings from each person, (Life of Wiclif, pp. 157, 158.) But there was no branch of the ecclesiastical system free from this corruption, and it was important to know that Wycliffe’s opposition to the evil was as extended as the evil itself, and that it was founded on the most rational and devout principles. — Note to the second edition.

CHAP. proceeding from the necessities or the avarice of  
 VIII. the papal court had occasioned serious complaint, the successor of St. Peter was still revered as the spiritual head of Christendom. From him, as from a fountain, all clerical power, it was thought, must proceed; and to him either alone, or as connected with a general council, lay the last appeal on every question relating to the doctrine or the discipline of the church. The vices of this spiritual sovereign, might be as pre-eminent as his station; but it was, nevertheless true, that on him, as the master-link, the whole hierarchy depended for its sanctity and existence. Wycliffe saw that an important relation did indeed subsist between the head and the members of that vast body. But that this relation was of divine appointment, he explicitly denied; nor could he doubt the corruption of a fountain, whence so much evil had descended.

The prelates of the age are said to assert, “that they ought not to be subject to secular lords, so as to pay them taxes, and to aid the commons; and also that they are not to be amended by their people of their open sins, but by the pope, who is their sovereign, and he by no man on earth, because he is greater than all.”<sup>46</sup> The reformer observes, in another treatise, and with visible indignation, “that when men speak against prelates and the religious, appealing to the poverty, and meekness, and other virtues of Christ, they say that these are the counsels, and not the commandments of Christ; and that, therefore, the bishop of

<sup>46</sup> MS. *On Prelates*, c. xvii.

“ Rome, who of all men is most contrary to CHAP.  
VIII.  
 “ Christ in life and teaching, may dispense with  
 “ them.”<sup>47</sup> On the impiety of this doctrine,  
 Wycliffe thus writes. “ All those who falsify  
 “ the pope’s bulls, or a bishop’s letter, are cursed  
 “ grievously in all churches, four times in the  
 “ year. Lord, why was not the gospel of Christ  
 “ admitted by our worldly clerks into this sen-  
 “ tence? Hence, it appeareth, that they magnify  
 “ the bull of a pope, more than the gospel; and  
 “ in proof of this, they punish men who trespass  
 “ against the bulls of the pope, more than those  
 “ who trespass against the gospel of Christ.  
 “ Accordingly, the men of this world fear the  
 “ pope’s lead, and his commandments, more than  
 “ the gospel of Christ, or the commands of God.  
 “ It is thus that the wretched beings of this  
 “ world, are estranged from faith, and hope, and  
 “ charity; and become corrupt in heresy and  
 “ blasphemy, even worse than heathens. Thus  
 “ it is, that a clerk, a mere collector of pence,  
 “ who can neither read nor understand a verse  
 “ in his psalter, nor repeat the commandments  
 “ of God, bringeth forth a bull of lead, testifying  
 “ in opposition to the doom of God, and of ma-  
 “ nifest experience, that he is able to govern  
 “ many souls. And to act upon this false bull,  
 “ he will incur costs and labour, and often fight,  
 “ and get fees, and give much gold out of our  
 “ land to aliens and enemies; and many are  
 “ thereby slaughtered by the hand of our ene-  
 “ mies, to their comfort and our confusion. Also

<sup>47</sup> MS. There be eight things by which simple christian men be es-  
 tranged, &c. Bibl. Bodl.

CHAP. VIII. "the proud priest of Rome getteth images of Peter and Paul on his lead, and would have christian men believe, that all which the bulls thus sealed speak, is done by their authority, and that of Christ. And thus as far as he may, he maketh that which is false to be the work of Peter, and Paul, and Christ, and in this would make them false. And by means of this blasphemy, he robbeth Christendom of faith, and good life, and worldly goods."<sup>48</sup> Instead of bowing to this authority, the reformer states it to be "the certain understanding of some men, that the cruel manslayer of Rome, is not St. Peter's successor; but the enemy of Christ, the master of the emperor, and poison, under the colour of holiness; and that he maketh most unable curates."<sup>49</sup> In the following extract, the tenet adverted to is numbered with those clerical inventions, which in later ages had so far destroyed the simplicity of the christian

<sup>48</sup> MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. xvi. Rome he elsewhere describes, as converted into a mart for the property of the church, "where he who can bring the most gold, shall soonest be appointed to great benefices." The men so introduced are said to be examples of pride and other sins, and hinderances to other true priests who would teach the law of God. And he remarks with solemnity "that of all the vengeance which God taketh of sinful men this is most, to suffer such hypocrites to rule the people, and by a withdrawalment of his word to draw them to hell." To announce such men "as able curates, and great men of holy church," is noticed as a fair sample of "Anti-christ's blasphemy." In the face of

all these corruptions, the clergy are said to maintain their allegiance to their chief, "so that when Paul asks how men should preach, except they be sent, they understand this but of such as are sent by the pope, and other worldly prelates." To this, however, it is replied, "that sending of these worldly prelates is not enough, without a sending of God, as St. Paul saith." The authority thus assumed, is not only such as would make good men depend on the sanction of "fiend's children" that they might preach the gospel, but such as would even prevent an angel from delivering his message to the world, should it please this haughty priest to controvert "God's bidding." Ibid. c. i.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. c. iii.

profession. " Prelates also make many new points  
 " of belief, and say it is not enough to believe  
 " in Jesus Christ, and to be baptized—as Christ  
 " saith in the gospel by St. Mark—except a man  
 " also believe that the bishop of Rome is the head  
 " of holy church. But certainly no apostle of  
 " Jesus Christ ever constrained any man to be-  
 " lieve this of himself. And yet they were cer-  
 " tain of their salvation in heaven. How then  
 " should any sinful wretch constrain men to be-  
 " lieve that he is head of holy church, while  
 " he knows not whether he shall be saved or  
 " lost? Certainly, when the bishop of Rome is  
 " one who shall be condemned for his sin, it is a  
 " devil of hell that they would compel men to  
 " regard as the head of holy church!"<sup>50</sup>

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But the supremacy of the pontiff may be totally renounced, and the forms of that hierarchy, of which he was so long the accredited head, be carefully retained. And had Wycliffe seen the members

On the  
hierarchy.

<sup>50</sup> MS. Of Prelates, c. xiv. Adverting to the papal schism, he concedes the claim of Urban to be preferable to that of his rival, but speaks of any opinion on that subject as " beside belief," that is, as being no essential part of the christian faith. It is in the following manner that he frequently exposes the inconsistencies involved in the doctrine of the pope's supremacy. " It is openly said that there is no thing lawful among christian men without leave of the bishop of Rome, though he should be Antichrist, full of simony and heresy. And commonly, of all priests he is most contrary to Christ, both in life and teaching; and he maintaineth most sin by his privileges, excommunications, and long pleas: and he is

" most proud in opposition to Christ's meekness, and most covetous of worldly goods and lordships." To place the church under the control of such authority, is described as her subjection to the power of Antichrist, Ibid. c. xxii. Thus also, in one of the latest of his homilies he states that " true men say that so long as Christ is in heaven the church hath in him the best pope; and that distance hindereth him not in doing his deeds, as he promiseth that he is with his always to the end of the world." Such men, it is farther said, " dare not put two heads, lest the church be monstrous." The " Head above" is therefore commended as alone worthy of confidence. Hom. Bib. Reg. 181.



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of the christian aristocracy, distinguished by their piety and pastoral zeal, as they were by names and jurisdiction, it is probable that the propriety of the distinctions conceded to prelates or metropolitans, would never have been questioned by him. Before his day, many vigorous efforts had been made to check the despotism of the papacy, but the claims of the national hierarchies had been, in general, regarded as sacred. To our reformer, however, these gradations of office in the church appeared to be unauthorized and injurious. I must presume that the reader is familiar with the substance of the controversy relating to this subject, and content myself with simply stating the judgment of Wycliffe concerning it, in his own language. Dividing the church into three parts, consisting of “preachers, defenders, and labourers,” he describes the first as including the men “who should be next to Christ, and next to heaven, and most full of charity.” Of this part he also states, that “they should all be of one religion, as priests and deacons, living the life of clerks. But the fiend,” he remarks, “has changed this part to many colours, as seculars and religious. And these have both many parts, as popes, and cardinals, and bishops, and archdeacons : also monks, and canons, hospitalers, and friars.” The writer then proceeds to expose the sectarian animosities, and the spirit of domination, which these diversities of pretension and authority are said to have introduced ; and the whole is regarded as the chastisement incurred by deserting the laws of the gospel, which declare that “it were better for clerks to be all of one

“state.” The origin of the distinctions which had obtained among the secular clergy, is thus given. CHAP.  
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“By the ordinance of Christ, priests and bishops were all one. But afterwards, the emperor divided them, and made bishops lords, and priests their servants; and this was the cause of envy, and quenched much charity. For the ordinances of Christ are founded in meekness, in unity, and charity, and in contempt of riches, and high estate.” This reasoning he concludes by observing, “so if possessioners were brought to that state which Christ ordained for his clerks, then should men live in charity, both with seculars and also with the religious.”<sup>51</sup>

In his Trialogus, the same doctrine is more than once inculcated. He there observes, “I boldly assert one thing, viz. that in the primitive church, or in the time of Paul, two orders of the clergy were sufficient, that is, a priest and a deacon. In like manner I affirm, that in the time of Paul, presbyter and bishop were names of the same office. This appears from the third chapter of the first Epistle to Timothy, and in the first chapter of the Epistle to Titus. And the same is testified by that profound theologian Jerome.” He then remarks again, that the authority of popes and cardinals, of patriarchs, archbishops, and other dignitaries, was unknown in the primitive church; and thus concludes: “From the faith of the scriptures, it seems to me to be sufficient, that there should be presbyters and deacons holding that state and office which Christ has

<sup>51</sup> MS. On the Seven Deadly Sins. Cod. Ric. Jamesii. Bibl. Bodl.

CHAP. VIII. "imposed on them, since it appears certain, that  
 ——— "these degrees and orders have their origin in  
 "the pride of Cæsar. If, indeed, they were  
 "necessary to the church, Christ and his apostles  
 "would not have been silent respecting them, as  
 "those impiously pretend who magnify the papal  
 "laws above those of Christ. Every catholic  
 "should judge of the office of the clergy, from  
 "what is taught in scripture, especially in the  
 "Epistles to Timothy and Titus. Nor ought he  
 "to admit the new inventions of Cæsar."<sup>52</sup>

On the reli-  
 gious orders.

But it will be perceived, that while all gradation of authority among the secular clergy is thus rejected, their general claims, as an order, are considered as legitimate. This concession, however, is not made with regard to the monks, or the mendicants. These are regarded as subject to laws which are in themselves opposed to scripture, and in their tendency only evil; while the parochial clergy have simply to return to the spirit of their vocation, to become, indeed, the fathers of their people, and the chief benefactors of their country. What the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes were in the age of the Saviour, that the friars, the monks, and the canons, are said to have become in the history of the church,—a multitude embracing so much of the element of dis-

<sup>52</sup> Trialogus, lib. iv. c. xv. "Touching  
 "holy orders, he held that there were  
 "but two, viz. of deacons and priests,  
 "so do we." Dr. James's Apology for  
 John Wycliffe, p. 31. The doctor prob-  
 ably refers to the following passage  
 in the "Institution of a Christian  
 "Man," a work which was intended  
 to express the doctrine of the church  
 of England under Henry VIII. "The

"trouthe is, that in the Newe Testa-  
 "mente there is no mention made of  
 "any degrees or distinctions in orders,  
 "but only of deacons or ministers, and  
 "of priests or bishops. Nor is there  
 "any word spoken of any other cere-  
 "mony used in the conferring of this  
 "sacrament, but only of prayer, and  
 "of the imposition of the bishop's  
 "hand." c. xlii.

cord, as to be agreed in nothing, except in their opposition to the designs of the gospel. It is true, the contemporary prelates are frequently compared to Annas and Caiaphas; but they are still described as “less hypocrites” than the religious, inasmuch as these not only descend to the same vices, but aggravate their guilt by claiming the reputation of unusual sanctity. That, however, which chiefly offended our reformer, in the case of these fraternities, was the reflection which their very existence involved with respect to the wisdom or the benevolence of the Redeemer. The preference of human inventions to the known example, or to the plain instructions of the Son of God, he viewed as including the essence of blasphemy, since it imputed defect to the Godhead. It is thus he reasons to show, that these pretenders to superior purity were in truth idolaters. “If they choose to be ruled more according to the ordinance of sinful men and idiots, than according to the pure ordinance of Christ; and say that the ordinance of sinful man is better, and more certain, and more perfect than is the pure ordinance of Christ; herein they treacherously break all the commandments of God. They worship false gods, and are heretics and blasphemers; they worship, and love, and fear sinful men, and, in some cases, even devils, more than God Almighty; and Austin saith, that a man maketh that to be his god, which he feareth most, and loveth most.”<sup>53</sup> While such were the reformer’s opi-

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<sup>53</sup> MS. Discourse on Luke, c. x. Attendite a fermento Pharisees, &c. C. C. C. Cambridge. See c. vii. p. 233.

CHAP. nions as to the origin, and the character, of the  
 VIII. religious orders, it is not surprising that in his plans  
 ————— for sequestrating the endowments of the church, the  
 wealth of the monasteries should be pointed out as  
 especially susceptible of a much wiser application.

On the na-  
 ture of the  
 Christian  
 church.

Nor was he at all aware of hazarding any real  
 interest of the church, by his proposed exclusion  
 of all official precedence from among her priest-  
 hood, or by his unqualified opposition to the  
 monastic orders. Since the period in which  
 assemblies of fallible men were first allowed to  
 determine the tenets which should be acknow-  
 ledged as christian by whole provinces and  
 nations, the name of the church had been  
 imperceptibly transferred from the people to their  
 spiritual guides. The judgment of the church  
 ceased to be that of the body of the faithful. And  
 that modest deference to general opinion, which  
 was observable in the conduct of the earlier mi-  
 nisters of the gospel, was not enough to satisfy  
 the more doubtful claims of many among their  
 successors. Passing by the customs of cen-  
 turies,—over which a melancholy glance was often  
 cast, as on the gloomy space in which every thing  
 evil had sprung up,—the reformer took his place  
 with the christian brotherhood of the ages im-  
 mediately following that of the apostles; and  
 from the facts of that age, and of some others fol-  
 lowing, as well as from holy writ, he learned to  
 discard the notion of a church representative—that  
 is, a church including the teachers and excluding  
 the taught. A senate may represent a nation, but  
 it is not the nation. Hence, whether Wycliffe's  
 attention were directed to ecclesiastical authority,

or to ecclesiastical wealth, he contended that by such expressions, as far as they occur at all in the memorials of primitive christianity, it is the power and the property of the christian fellowship that are meant, and not merely those of the clergy. He speaks accordingly of his scheme, in relation to the endowments of the church, as more nearly allied to general equity than to the guilt of sacrilege. And when required to bow to the decision of the church, the propriety of such a demand is less the matter of dispute, than the claims of the christian priesthood to be considered as forming the church; and as being, in consequence, alone possessed of church authority. His doctrine on this point, is thus stated. "When men speak  
 " of holy church, anon, they understand prelates  
 " and priests, with monks, and canons, and friars,  
 " and all men who have tonsures, though they  
 " live accursedly, and never so contrary to the  
 " law of God. But they call not the seculars  
 " men of holy church, though they live never so  
 " truly, according to God's law, and die in perfect  
 " charity. Nevertheless, all who shall be saved in  
 " the bliss of heaven, are members of holy church,  
 " and no more." Many, on the contrary, who are called such are "the enemies thereof, and the  
 " synagogue of Satan."<sup>54</sup> At another time, he writes, "all those are cursed solemnly, who spoil,  
 " or take away any right from holy church, or  
 " defraud holy church of any endowment;" and to this it is replied, "that christian men, taught  
 " in God's law, call holy church the congregation  
 " of just men, for whom Jesus Christ shed his

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<sup>54</sup> MS. On Eight Things by which Simple Men are destroyed.

CHAP. " blood ; and not mere stones, and timber, and  
 VIII. " earthly dross, which the clerks of Antichrist  
 " magnify more than the righteousness of God,  
 " and the souls of men." <sup>55</sup>

On spiritual  
 censures.

But while thus assailing what he believed to be the great incentives to avarice and ambition among the clergy, he must have been aware of some means of protection from those spiritual weapons which were still in the hands of churchmen, and which were so often found to subdue the courage of the most turbulent. The keys of heaven were claimed by the successors of St. Peter, as their own, and to be employed at their pleasure. By each ecclesiastic, from the pontiff himself to the humblest parish priest, the same mysterious control over the future was assumed ; but by every member of the hierarchy the power of absolution must be derived, either immediately, or remotely, from the man raised to the apostolic chair. From the sentence of every subordinate authority there remained an appeal to the next in gradation. But until revoked by a superior, the words of binding or loosing, by whomsoever pronounced, were regarded as certainly determining the future allotment of the parties on whom they were pronounced. In the present state also, the sentence of excommunication cut off its victim from the remotest intercourses of social life. In this way

<sup>55</sup> MS. *Sentence of the Curse Expounded*, c. ii. The church, as described above, the reformer calls the " very body " of Christ ; but he speaks also of the " mixed or seeming body," meaning the professing church on earth, as including " chosen men and hypo-

crites." MS. *Of Wedded Men, &c.* The prologue quoted by Mr. Lewis on this subject (p. 152) is not the production of our reformer. See Baber's *Memoir of Wiclif*, p. 51 Note to the second edition.



it was made to anticipate the horrors of a final separation from the communion of the blessed. Thus canonically invested, the village curate appeared among his plebeian worshippers, armed with every instrument capable of effecting their subjection to his will; and while prelates lanced their anathemas against the aristocracy of the nations, monarchs were gravely taught, that the sovereign of the church could alone admit them to the celestial kingdom, and that should they die under the frown of the great representative of Deity, hell from beneath must move to meet them at his bidding! By this king of kings, the provinces of an offending monarch were frequently interdicted, and the acts of christian worship limited to the observance of such rites only as were deemed essential to salvation,—an event which threw an air of gloom and desolation over a country, of which, from the altered customs of more recent times, a partial conception only can be formed. To distract the councils of such a prince, the thunders of the papal court were often so directed, as to separate his principal advisers from himself, and from each other; and what this malignant policy failed to accomplish, was not unfrequently effected by absolving the whole of his subjects from their allegiance. By the disaffected, in a kingdom subject to these visitations of papal wrath, this collision of power was often hailed as auspicious; and many a long meditated treason was at once matured into revolt. Thus the court of Rome might inflict all the miseries of invasion, without incurring the danger attendant on such aggressions; and might

CHAP. as readily diffuse every element of revolution  
VIII. ——— through a nation, and be herself secure from the penalties threatened to the traitor. The doctrine, which, in the language of Rome, is called the power of the keys, formed the basis of this most iniquitous of tyrannies. And so long as the maxims of spiritual power which the papal court had adopted were acknowledged, those by which she sought her worldly ascendancy could not be questioned, without inconsistency, and in consequence, with little prospect of success. Reformation in the faith and in the manners of the clergy was strictly necessary ; but it was no less necessary to the accomplishment of that object, that the spell should be broken, which had led mankind to suppose that the priest possessed a power to control the destiny of the man, or of the community, who should attempt the renovation of the church. Wycliffe was fully apprised of this fact. Hence, while the mysteries of transubstantiation remained unquestioned, and even before he became known as concerned to translate the scriptures into the mother tongue, he laboured, as we have seen, to expose the fallacy and impiety of these perilous fictions. His reasonings on this subject occur, more or less prominently, in nearly the whole of his writings ; and this importance is evidently assigned to them, from their obvious tendency to recover the mind of his countrymen from that bondage which this doctrine had imposed, and to abolish the complicated evils which had flown from it. Had the suffering which was said to be inflicted by the sentence of excommunication been far less

fearful, the levity with which it was resorted to <sup>CHAP. VIII.</sup> would have provoked the displeasure of our re-  
former, from its marked opposition to a religion characterized by the most tender expressions of benevolence. But when the alarming evils, said to be included in these penalties, were viewed in connexion with the almost ceaseless infliction of them; and when both were considered in relation to the motives commonly producing them, motives evidently derived from the love of some paltry interest, the indignation of Wycliffe was often so far excited as to vent itself in language of the sternest mould. At a moment of this description, the following passage appears to have been written. “ Christ said, as the gospel of Luke  
“ witnesseth, that the Son of man came not to  
“ lose men’s lives, but to save them. Why then  
“ do our wayward curates curse the souls of so  
“ many men to hell, and their bodies to prison,  
“ and doom them to loss of goods, and sometimes  
“ to death, for the sake of a little gain? And  
“ this too, while they are themselves accursed  
“ of God, for simony done at their entrance into  
“ office, and for their failure in preaching, and  
“ in giving the example of a holy life! Tithes,  
“ therefore, are not due to them, but only pain  
“ in hell. Often are they thus evil tormentors,  
“ slaying the soul which is bought by the precious  
“ blood of Christ, and which is better than all  
“ the riches of this world. Surely they are not  
“ spiritual fathers to christian souls, who thus by  
“ their cursing would condemn their children to  
“ hell for the sake of a little perishing clay! This  
“ is to do worse than pagans, for they tormented

CHAP. " the body only, and not the soul for evermore ;  
 VIII. " but these children of Satan, devise with all  
 " their power to plunge the soul into everlasting  
 " pain. Yea, certainly on this point, these way-  
 " ward curates of Satan, would seem to be worse  
 " than fiends, since *they* torment no soul, except  
 " on account of infinite sin, while these clerks of  
 " Satan doom souls to hell for a little temporal  
 " debt, which they would pay as soon as they  
 " are able, and which indeed is often no debt,  
 " except as founded in old errors, and frauds,  
 " and customs brought in against the command-  
 " ment of God."<sup>56</sup>

It is in the following language that he describes the impiety of the doctrine which made the pardon of sin to depend on the benediction of a priest, and to be in truth the act of a mortal. " Worldly  
 " prelates blaspheme against God, the Father of  
 " Heaven, by taking to themselves a power which  
 " is especially and only his, that is, a power of  
 " absolving from sins, and of giving a full re-  
 " mission of them. For they take on them *prin-*  
 " *cipally* the absolving from sin, and they make  
 " the people to believe this of them, when, in  
 " truth, they have only absolved as vicars or mes-  
 " sengers, witnessing to the people, that on their  
 " contrition, God absolveth them. Without the  
 " sinner be contrite, that is fully have sorrow for  
 " his sins, neither angel, nor man, nor God him-  
 " self, absolveth him."<sup>57</sup> The practice of separating the excommunicated from the common charities of life, is thus calmly examined. " By

<sup>56</sup> MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. xvii.

<sup>57</sup> MS. Of Prelates, c. xlii.

“our prelates, all those who commune with  
 “cursed men, are cursed, particularly if they do  
 “it wittingly. But by this sentence it would  
 “seem that God himself is to be accursed, since  
 “no excommunicated man will continue in this  
 “life without God’s communing with him, and  
 “giving him breath and sustenance, and this  
 “whether he be censured rightfully or wrongfully.  
 “And if God be ready to give him grace, and the  
 “forgiveness of his sins if he worthily ask it, and  
 “even before he ask it, this sentence would seem  
 “too broad, since our good God may not be held  
 “accursed.”<sup>58</sup> These enlightened sentiments  
 are left to make their own impression on the  
 reader. Concluding one of his most extended treatises,  
 and a work wholly devoted to this subject,  
 he observes, “Men wonder much why prelates  
 “and curates curse so freely, inasmuch as St.  
 “Paul and St. Peter commanded men to bless,  
 “and not to have a wish to curse, while Jesus  
 “Christ blessed his enemies, and heartily prayed  
 “for them, even while they nailed him to the  
 “cross. And still more men wonder why they  
 “curse so freely in their own cause, and for  
 “worldly gain, and not on account of injury done  
 “to Christ, and his majesty. For men should be  
 “patient under their own wrongs, as were Christ  
 “and his apostles, but against God’s honour and  
 “majesty should they suffer no words to be  
 “spoken, as is the case in false and vain oaths,  
 “and impure ribaldry. But most of all men  
 “wonder why worldly clerks curse so freely for  
 “breaking their own statutes, privileges, and

CHAP.  
VIII.

<sup>58</sup> MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. xxv.

CHAP.  
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“ wayward customs, more than for an open  
 “ breaking of the commandments of God ; since  
 “ no man is cursed of God, except for breaking  
 “ of these, whatever worldly wretches may prate ;  
 “ and no man is blessed of God, or shall come to  
 “ heaven, but he who keepeth the commands of  
 “ God. In the hour of death, it will be in vain  
 “ that the wicked man hath never so many bulls  
 “ of indulgence or pardon, or letters of fraternity,  
 “ or thousands of masses by priests, monks, or  
 “ friars. Let prelates and curates therefore leave  
 “ these points, for many of them are as false as  
 “ Satan ; and let them teach the will of God, and  
 “ God’s curse, and the pains of hell as due to  
 “ men unless they amend in this life ; and what  
 “ bliss men shall have, if they teach truly the  
 “ gospel of Christ, in word, and in holiness of  
 “ life. And let them teach the mercy of God in  
 “ the greatness of his blessing to all who continue  
 “ to the end in true faith, and hope, and charity  
 “ to God and man. God grant us this end.  
 “ Amen.”<sup>59</sup> From these passages, it is evident,  
 that with Wycliffe, the propriety of spiritual cen-  
 sures, considered as a branch of christian disci-  
 pline, was not a questionable matter. The abuses  
 of this authority, and the deceptions which were  
 connected with it, formed the matter of complaint.  
 And revolting as these corruptions may now  
 appear, it was to accomplish no small thing, to  
 compel our ancestors of the fourteenth century  
 to “ wonder ” at them, and especially to wonder  
 at them for the reasons assigned. Through many  
 ages, the nations of Europe had bowed to this

<sup>59</sup> MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. xxv.

fearful despotism ; and they had bowed to it as to one, which if not divine in its origin, had become so consolidated as to make resistance hopeless.”<sup>60</sup> CHAP.  
VIII.

But churchmen were indebted for much of their opulence and power, to a doctrine which extended their influence from the living to the dead. Indeed, had the state of the departed been considered as irrevocable, the one half of the papal empire would not have been obtained. And it is a circumstance of some peculiarity, that the English reformer, whose inquiries respecting the doctrine of the church were so fearlessly conducted, was not allowed to proceed so far as wholly to reject this lucrative device. The fact, however, may be explained. It must not be overlooked, that the doctrine of an intermediate state as adhered to by Wycliffe, was separated from nearly every thing which had rendered it so alluring to the clergy. The custom of praying for the dead is certainly of much earlier origin than many of the corruptions which the reformer was called to oppose ; and of a still prior date was the kindred practice of offering thanksgiving for the aid vouchsafed to such believers as had closed their probation with distinguished honour. In the disputes of theologians, it has been sometimes deemed important to treat these services as of the same import. There is, however, a marked difference between them. They were, indeed, alike the offspring of heathenism, and made their appearance in the church, along with those

On the doctrine of purgatory.

<sup>60</sup> Mr. Lewis treats of this important doctrine, pp. 151—167, and has given another extract on the point in p. 157. The reader, who can refer

to those pages, will see that passages more extended and explicit than any hitherto published, were greatly needed.—Note to the second edition.



CHAP. superstitious observances which, as her gentile  
 VIII. converts increased, were so rapidly multiplied.

So late, however, as the eighth century, to pray for a departed spirit, was not necessarily to consider its state as one of suffering. But as the custom of thank-offerings was succeeded by petitions, so the notion of mere quiescence or repose was followed by that of a refining fire. And as the degree of torment endured would naturally regulate the worth of the services which were regarded as tending to abate its severity, or to hasten its close—the temptation to assign to this artifice a most prominent place in the machinery of papal superstition, became too powerful to be resisted.<sup>61</sup>

In one of his early pieces, Wycliffe has cited St. Augustine as teaching that “souls in purgatory are helped and comforted, and brought out thereof by the fasting of kinsmen, by the alms of friends, and by the devout prayers of good men and saints.”<sup>62</sup> This statement is quoted with approbation, and this will not excite surprise if it be remembered that the writings of Augustine were revered by the reformer as next in authority to those of inspiration. In a subsequent treatise, he confesses “that saying of masses with cleanness of holy life, and burning devotion, most pleaseth God Almighty, and profiteth to christian souls in purgatory, and to men living on earth, to withstand temptations to sin.”<sup>63</sup> In the same page, however, his indignant censure is pointed against the base

<sup>61</sup> See Prelim. View, c. i. sect. ii. p. 57.

<sup>62</sup> MS. Cott. Titus, D. xix. 129.

<sup>63</sup> MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded.

merchandise which this doctrine had been made to support. "Ah, Lord," he exclaims, "how much is our king and our realm helped by masses and prayers of simonists, and heretics full of pride and covetousness, and envy; and who so much hate poor priests, because they teach the gospel and the life of Christ."<sup>64</sup> In his work *On Prelates* the clergy are accused of "inventing new pains, horrible and shameful, to make men pay a great ransom,"<sup>65</sup> and to counteract this "artifice of Satan," he ventures to describe all masses "for which money is taken," as the contrivance of hypocrisy and avarice. It was with a view completely to abolish these mercenary services, and to rescue the people from that false and dangerous confidence which had been thus produced, that the reformer so strenuously inculcated his favourite maxim respecting the inefficacy of all intercessory prayer, unless offered in the spirit of sincere devotion. With the same view prayer is defined, as "consisting principally in holy life," and of this prayer the Redeemer is said to speak, "when he saith in the gospel, that we must pray evermore." In support of this interpretation, St. Augustine and other saints are appealed to, and the exercise is again said to "stand in holy desire, and also in word;" but the latter is declared "to be nought worth, except it be uttered with devotion, and purity, and accompanied by holiness of life." It is, therefore, inquired, "why the prayer of prelates should be magnified so much, and sold so dear, while they know

<sup>64</sup> Sentence of the Curse Expounded.<sup>65</sup> MS. c. iii.

CHAP. "not whether it shall be accepted or rejected?"  
 VIII.

"The prayer of the layman who shall be saved," is affirmed to be "without measure better than that of a prelate who shall be lost." It was pleaded, indeed, by such men, that if not heard "for their own holiness, they were heard in virtue of holy church;" but this is treated as "a dream, having no foundation in any place of holy writ, inasmuch as God saith absolutely, that such prayer is an abomination."<sup>66</sup> In another of his pieces, these masses are described as novelties, and are numbered in this respect with the pilgrimages, and the feigned absolutions of the period. He complains also of the clergy as "making the people believe, that if the priest say a certain mass for a soul, it shall anon be out of purgatory; and this, though God of his righteousness ordain that soul to abide there forty years or more, and though this priest be himself accursed for his simony and pride. For, as they falsely pretend, the mass may not be impaired."<sup>67</sup>

In these extracts there is no suspicion disclosed as to the reality of the pains of purgatory. But the efficacy of prayer for the dead is viewed as connected with the devotions of the laity, no less than with those of the clergy, and as attended in the case of both by so much uncertainty, as to demonstrate the weakness of the confidence so generally reposed in that kind of aid. The doctrine was thus divested of its chief importance as a source of gain to the clergy.

But it was not enough to question the success

<sup>66</sup> MS. On Prelates, c. xi.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. c. xxxviii.

of intercession in favour of the departed while performed by the more vicious of the clergy. A considerable scepticism is after a while expressed with respect to its influence when proceeding from characters less objectionable, or even from the pontiff himself. In the work intitled, "Of the Church and her Governance," evidently one of his latest productions, the words of the Saviour, "let the dead bury their dead," are cited as discountenancing such practices, though perpetuated by the most devoted men, and with the best intentions.<sup>68</sup> And when he states that "the pope and his, are out of all charity, if there dwell any soul in purgatory, since he may," according to the popular creed, "with full heart, and without any cost deliver them," it is beyond doubt that his faith in an intermediate state, regarded it as an abode over which little or no influence could be exerted by any power on earth. For many years previous to his death, his allusions to this tenet are few and cautious, tending almost invariably to separate it from its corruptions, rather than to define its import or its uses. In his sermons there is scarcely one in fifty containing the least reference to it, and the notices which occur are so transient and obscure as to bespeak the general indecision of his mind on this point.<sup>69</sup> From his increasing perception of the errors connected with this doctrine, which

<sup>68</sup> MS. Bib. Reg. 18, b. ix.

<sup>69</sup> In the MS. last cited, he speaks of the church as consisting of three parts, "the saints in purgatory," forming one. In his *Triologus*, also, the church is thus described, "Tri-

"plex est Ecclesia militans, dormiens, et triumphans." iv. 22. In one of his later homilies he describes John the Baptist as the most devout man "after Christ," and yet speaks of him as going to "purgatory" at death.

CHAP. is so observable in his writings, it may be doubted,  
 VIII. whether he considered the intermediate state as  
 at all a state of suffering, at the period of his  
 death.<sup>70</sup>

On the  
 abuse of  
 sanctuaries.

By the doctrine of purgatory, the decisions of the invisible tribunal, though regarded as proceeding from the will of the Deity, were supposed to be modified, and frequently revoked, in compliance with the intercessions of the priesthood. The same motives also, which had secured a credence to this supposed interference with the allotments of the spiritual regions, produced a submission to many clerical intrusions in the administration of criminal justice in the present world. The cities of refuge were sanctioned by the Hebrew polity; and it is well known that similar immunities were granted to particular localities in gentile nations. In both, the existence of such retreats may have been sometimes favourable to equity, by arresting the arm of violence, or of lawless revenge. But the evils which were inse-

<sup>70</sup> Dr. Lingard not only says of our reformer that "he inculcated the doctrine of purgatory," but that "he strenuously maintained the efficacy of the mass;" and the amount of information hitherto possessed on this point may be inferred from the circumstance that this is said on the authorities supplied by Mr. Lewis. But surely the man who could go through his pulpit services for twelve months together without more than a single reference to the mass, except to censure its imperfections and abuses, can hardly be said to have been a strenuous advocate for its efficacy. Mr. Lewis may be right in stating that Wycliffe believed in "the bitter pains of purgatory," for

during a large portion of his life he did so. But in inquiries of this nature nearly every thing must depend upon dates. To a correct acquaintance with this subject, it was strictly necessary to know the frequency or the variety of the reformer's allusions to it, to know, also, something of the distinctness or obscurity that may have marked those allusions, and to know, above all, that before his death, Wycliffe had learned to use the word purgatory as referring merely to an intermediate state through which the most holy of mankind must pass to their final rest. Lingard's Hist. iv. 266. Lewis, 161. —Note to the second edition.

parable from this custom in heathen states, were too soon connected with it as adopted in the christian church. In the age of William the first, and so late as the reign of Stephen, the rights of sanctuary, which protected the place of christian worship from those deeds of rapine and bloodshed which then filled the land, were often a political benefit. But in the age of Edward the third, the uses of these places of retreat were not so obvious. Wycliffe appears to have seen them only through the medium of their abuses, and these were evidently of the most flagrant description. "Westminster, Beverley, and other places," are described as "challenging this franchise and "privilege." In opposing this pretension, it is observed that the cities of refuge afforded but a temporary shelter to offenders, and to such offenders only as had slain a man unwittingly; whereas modern sanctuaries were both a retreat, and a home, to culprits of every class. And this, while they were often known to be the most vicious of men. Thus he states indignantly, "that "wicked men, open thieves, known murderers, "and such as have borrowed their neighbours' "goods, and are able to make restitution, dwell "thus in sanctuary, and no man may impeach "them by process of law." And the clergy, it is observed, "maintain stiffly that the king "should confirm this privilege, though serving "but to perpetuate a nest of thieves in his "kingdom."<sup>71</sup>

CHAP.  
VIII.

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Nor was the influence of churchmen with respect to an intermediate state, and of the present

On the invocation of saints.

<sup>71</sup> MS. Sentence of the Curse Expounded, c. ix. xx.

CHAP.  
VIII.

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world, supposed to terminate with their removal to the celestial kingdom. Under every anxiety, whether arising from the immediate necessities of the worshipper, or from the supposed state of his departed kindred, the throne of those who had performed the work of intercession on earth, was believed to be accessible, and was regarded as forming, to the children of mortality, the most appropriate medium of approach to the majesty of heaven. An apostle, indeed, had emphatically declared, that “there is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus,” and it would seem sufficiently evident that to render this invocation of saints a rational service, these new objects of religious confidence should become vested with the attributes of Deity,—at least with omnipresence, or omniscience. In the face, however, of these, and of other difficulties, the practice became general,—so much so, that the name of the Saviour was nearly excluded from the devotions of the people by those of the Virgin, and of the multitude, whose sanctity, or ambition, had secured them a place in the Roman calendar. This custom of praying *to* the departed, like that of praying *for* them, was opposed by Wycliffe, with a firmness which increased as the errors connected with it were discerned. At an early period, he had learned to regard many who were raised to the dignity of saints, as persons whose salvation was by no means certain. To confide in the lost for spiritual aid must be worse than vain. After a while, it was suggested as important to limit such invocations to those among the blessed, whose beatified state could be



ascertained from the language of the scriptures; and at length the entire practice is discounted-  
 nanced, as uncommanded, and as at variance  
 with a due regard to the mediation of Christ.<sup>72</sup>

CHAP.  
VIII.

There are few errors of the Romish church more objectionable in the esteem of protestants than those which relate to the adoration of images. So striking a conformity with the leading feature of those superstitions, which christianity was so plainly intended to counteract and destroy, was not to become suddenly prevalent. And if it has survived the shock of the protestant reformation, this has not been without resisting a degree of light which has rendered the act of bowing down to any likeness of invisible realities in a much greater degree criminal. It might have been expected, that customs which obtained their ascendancy amid the barbarism attendant on the fall of the empire, would have been gradually discouraged, as the civilization of Christendom advanced. But to vindicate this semi-heathenism the most distinguished Romanists have exhausted the stores of their erudition, and employed the

On the  
worship of  
images.

<sup>72</sup> Hom. Bib. Reg. 18. b. xiv. "The church of England," he observes, "has this very reasonable custom, that when a saint is invoked the words are addressed immediately to Jesus Christ, and not principally to the saints; nor is the solemnity of a saint-day to any purpose if it does not tend to magnify Jesus Christ, and to make souls in love with him. It is therefore to be inferred, that when the observance of such days deviates from this end, the motive must be avarice, or some other sin; which disposes many men to think

"that all those saint-days ought to be abolished, that they may celebrate the festival of Jesus Christ alone, that the memory of Jesus Christ being always recent, the devotion of the people might be no longer parcelled out between him and his members." Trialogus, iii. 31. The chapter contains many things on the excellence and sufficiency of the Redeemer's mediation, and on the sinister motives from which the practice of commending other intercessors had arisen.

CHAP. whole of their strength. The doctrine of infal-  
 VIII.  
 ——— libility, though it was not strictly necessary that it should operate at all with respect to such a matter, has no doubt been the chief cause of this pertinacity. It may be also, that to inform the understanding, and discipline the affections, has been found a more laborious enterprise, than to impress the senses, and to raise indefinite emotion to the place of principle.

This custom certainly did not provoke the degree of opposition from our reformer, that, reasoning from other points, was to have been expected. It should, however, be remembered, that by declaring the Most High to be the only object of religious worship, and the Son of God to be the only Mediator, he not only condemned the invocation of saints, but stripped their images and relics of whatever had rendered them the matters of a superstitious veneration. While such were his doctrines, no visible object of worship could be recognized, excepting such as were admitted to represent that Invisible Nature, of whose compassion to our race the cross was the most affecting memorial. And that the use even of this was at length discarded, may be safely inferred from the fact, that his immediate disciples provoked the displeasure of the clergy by their undisguised contempt of every such aid to devotion.<sup>73</sup> Some years, also, before his death, he remarked, that a near connexion existed between gazing on an image, and the act of idolatry. And to those who were accustomed to plead, that no worship was rendered to the image, but to the

<sup>73</sup> Wals. 358.

Being represented by it, his reply was, that such was the reasoning of idolatrous heathens, and the men resorting to it are described as the patrons of idolatry.<sup>74</sup>

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VIII.

With these efforts to counteract the propensities to creature-worship, the reformer connected an exposure of the doctrine which exhibited the more illustrious of the saints as having performed certain works of piety or mercy, beyond what were necessary to their own salvation; and which taught, moreover, that these works were left to be dispensed by the clergy, to the more necessitous, in the matter of such virtues. This scheme, which bespeaks an ignorance of the gospel scarcely a remove from heathenism, was the faith of the populace in every state of Europe through many centuries. And that churchmen, as the almoners of this spiritual bounty, might be able to distribute it efficiently, it was important that the wants of each applicant should be correctly ascertained. Hence the necessity of that momentous article in catholic discipline, confession to a priest.

The causes which, in the earlier ages of the church, had limited the office of arbitrator with respect to such secular disputes as arose among believers, to the christian pastor,<sup>75</sup> would tend to restrict the duty of confession, to the same order

Auricular  
confession.

<sup>74</sup> James's Apology, c. viii. sect. vi. MS. Exposit. Decal. p. 48. MS. Ecclesiæ Regimen, No. 10. He recommends "that the wasted treasure hanging on stocks and stones, be wisely spent in defence of the kingdom, and in relieving of the poor commons, that the people of our

"land be not brought to theft and  
"lechery under colour of such pil-  
"grimages, nor alms drawn from  
"needy men who are bought with  
"Christ's precious blood. MS. Of  
"good Preaching Priests.

See Prelim. View, c. i. sect. x.

CHAP.  
VIII.

of men. But the practice of confession, as existing in the catholic church, resulted in a greater measure from her doctrine respecting the efficacy of priestly absolution. Wycliffe, while admitting the propriety of a form of absolution, denied that a penitent offender could fail to obtain pardon on account of a withholding of that ceremony. In like manner, he acknowledged that confession made to a priest might be seemly, and in some cases highly commendable; but it was at the same time affirmed, that where sanctity and wisdom were most conspicuous, whether in a priest, or a layman, there was most of the character necessary to receive confessions, and to administer the aids of religion. He accordingly remarks that "confession made to those who are "true priests, and who understand the will of "God, doth much good to sinful men, so long "as contrition for past sins come therewith."<sup>76</sup> On another occasion, he thus concludes a series of enlightened observations on this practice. "So this confession which is made to man, has "oftentimes been varied with the varying of the "church. For first, men confessed themselves "to God, and to the common people, and this "manner of confession was used in the time of "the apostles."<sup>77</sup> Much harm is said to have resulted from the abandonment of this primitive custom: for as no benediction of man can bring

<sup>76</sup> MS. *Sentence of the Curse Expounded*, c. vi. This passage is cited by Mr. Lewis, as containing a full statement of the reformer's doctrine with regard to this important article, (p. 171.) But, it will appear from the

passages which follow, that Wycliffe's sentiments on this point were greatly more enlightened than the extract given by my predecessor would suggest. Note to the second edition.

<sup>77</sup> MS. *Papa Schismæ*, c. iii.

the impenitent to heaven; and as sin generally bears its own punishment along with it; the canonical regulations with respect to penance, are viewed as superfluous and deceptive. The matters, indeed, which the confessor takes beneath his cognizance, are stated to be such as must often elude his penetration, and accordingly leave him unequal to the task of adjusting the penalties incurred. Where this failure of capacity occurred, the defect is said to have been too commonly supplied by caprice, and by motives still more objectionable. His parting advice, therefore is, “ Seeing that many men often “ confess themselves to their confessors in vain; “ confess thyself to God, with constancy, and “ contrition, and he may not fail, he will absolve “ thee.” <sup>78</sup>

It was thus the reformer endeavoured to disen-  
thral his countrymen, and to distinguish between  
the true claims of the christian pastor, and the  
assumed authority of the existing priesthood. To  
deprive churchmen of that dominion over the  
conscience, which the confessional had secured  
to them, was a step strictly necessary to restore  
in the laity of Christendom the feeling of re-  
sponsible beings, and to confer upon them, what  
no second tyranny has been known to invade—  
liberty of thought! So long as it was believed

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. It was something to teach that mere confession, though made to the highest ecclesiastical authority, was a useless service. It was more to assert that confession to a priest was not more a religious duty than confession to a layman. But Wycliffe learnt to believe that any man con-

fessing his sins to God alone, and doing it with penitence, should be assuredly saved. It was important to know that our reformer passed so far into the region of true christian liberty, and that he could thus urge his followers to use their freedom.—Note to the second edition.

CHAP. to be a duty to disclose in the ear of a confessor  
 VIII. what had passed in the secret places of the mind, the most cautious guard would be kept against the intrusion of thoughts opposed to the authority exercised by the clergy, or to the superstitions which that order of men had so long sanctioned. Let confession be necessary to absolution, and let absolution be an essential link in the chain of salvation, and the empire which the papal priesthood laboured to establish and perpetuate is conceded. To the mind of Wycliffe this connexion of things was manifest, and in the history of our country it was reserved to his master genius to break this triple cord.

On the doctrine of indulgences.

With confession to a priest the doctrine of indulgences is nearly allied. The sale of these commodities was the abuse which first roused the displeasure of Luther; and which contributed so much toward that memorable revolution with which his name is so illustriously associated. It will be proper, therefore, to notice the feeling with which they were regarded by Wycliffe, nearly two centuries earlier. We have seen that according to the doctrine of the church of Rome, the good works of the saints which were more than were required for their own justification, were deposited with the merits of the Saviour, so as to form a sort of spiritual treasury. "The keys of this," it has been observed, "were committed to St. Peter, and to his successors the popes, who may open it at pleasure, and by transferring a portion of this superabundant merit to any particular person for a sum of money, may convey to him either the pardon

“ of his own sins, or a release for any one in  
 “ whose happiness he is interested from the pains  
 “ of purgatory. Such indulgences were first in-  
 “ vented in the eleventh century, by Urban the  
 “ second, as a recompense for those who went  
 “ in person upon the meritorious enterprise of  
 “ conquering the Holy Land. They were after-  
 “ wards granted to those who hired a soldier  
 “ for that purpose, and in process of time were  
 “ bestowed on such as gave money for accom-  
 “ plishing any pious work enjoined by the pope.”<sup>79</sup>

It is, no doubt, true, that the embryo of this custom, as of most others in the history of the papacy, may be traced to a period much more remote than the pontificate of Urban the second. But that adjustment of the penalties of ecclesiastical discipline, which began at a comparatively early period to be restricted to the clergy, was gradually extended from what was to be endured in this world, to the sufferings awaiting the offender in the next; and a power which was once exercised with the tenderest solicitude for the spiritual welfare of the delinquent, became known, ere long, as a most effective means of storing the coffers of the priest. “ Prelates,” observes the English reformer, “ foully deceive christian men by their pretended indulgences or pardons, and rob them wickedly of their money.” In proof of this statement he remarks, “ that alms after the will of sinful men” may procure “ thousands of years of pardon, and also pardons without number, to man’s under-  
 “ standing.” These are also described as granted

<sup>79</sup> Robertson’s Charles V.



CHAP. VIII. “by virtue of Christ’s passion and martyrdom,  
 “and by the holy merits of saints, which they  
 “did, more than was needful for their own bliss.”  
 Offended by this strange mixture of creature-  
 merit with that of the Saviour, and scarcely less  
 with the pardon itself, which was presumed to be  
 so conveyed, he affirms that the doctrine is one  
 “never taught in all the gospel, and never used,  
 “neither by Paul, nor Peter, nor any other  
 “apostle of Christ; and yet they might, and  
 “could, and were so full of charity as certainly  
 “to have taught and used this pardon, if there  
 “had been any such. For in Christ was all  
 “manner of good doctrine, and good life, and  
 “charity, and these were most abundant, after  
 “him, in his apostles. And since Christ dis-  
 “covered and taught all that is needful and  
 “profitable, and still taught not this pardon, it  
 “follows that this pardon is neither needful nor  
 “profitable.”<sup>80</sup>

Adverting to the departed in an intermediate  
 state, he remarks, “it passeth man’s knowing  
 “what is the doom of such souls. It seemeth  
 “then great pride for sinful man to make himself  
 “certain and master of the judgment of God,  
 “which still he knoweth not.—Also if this pardon  
 “be a spiritual and heavenly gift, it should be  
 “given freely as Christ teaches in the gospel,  
 “and not for money, nor worldly goods, nor  
 “fleshly favour. But if a rich man will dearly  
 “buy it, he shall have a pardon extending to  
 “a thousand years, though he be really accursed  
 “of God for his sinful life. While the poor

<sup>80</sup> MS. On Prelates.

“ bedridden man, who may not travel to Rome, CHAP.  
 “ nor to such another place, he shall have no VIII.  
 “ pardon of the pope, though he be holy and full  
 “ of charity. Since then, this pardon, if there  
 “ be any such, should be freely given, it is theft  
 “ and robbery to take thus much gold for it.  
 “ Also this pretended pardon deceiveth many  
 “ men. For rich men trust to reach heaven  
 “ thereby without pain, and therefore the less  
 “ fear to sin; and of contrition, and forsaking sin,  
 “ and doing alms, little is spoken.”<sup>81</sup> He then  
 observes, that if the nature of such pardons were  
 “ truly told, they should be set at nought.”  
 Again, he remarks, “ great falseness it is so much  
 “ to magnify the power of the pope in purgatory,  
 “ such as no man here can show to be real,  
 “ either by holy writ, or reason; since, in this  
 “ world, we see an obscure man<sup>82</sup> may thus  
 “ despise the pope, and oppose his lordship; and  
 “ he doth in vain, all his might, all his wit, and  
 “ all his will, to be avenged upon such a poor  
 “ harlot. It seemeth, then, for many reasons,  
 “ that this feigned pardon is a subtle merchan-  
 “ dise of Antichrist’s clerks, to magnify their pre-  
 “ tended power, and to get worldly goods, and  
 “ to make men free from the fear of sin, and  
 “ sweetly to wallow therein as swine.”<sup>83</sup> If the  
 contemporaries of Luther admired the boldness  
 of the man, who could venture, though very cau-  
 tiously, to question this plenitude of the papal  
 power; the reader will judge of his claim to the  
 attribute of courage, who in much less favour-

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.<sup>82</sup> “ Little harlot” in MS. signifying a humble or despised person.<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

CHAP. able times, proceeded to a greater length in  
 VIII. exposing the assumptions of the same appalling  
 ——— despoticism.

On the celi-  
 bacy of the  
 clergy.

The connexion between auricular confession, and the most politic distribution of these indulgences, has been noticed. That which subsists between the business of the confessional, and the celibacy of the clergy, is equally certain, and equally dangerous. The law which required a disclosure of every particular that might possibly be connected with guilt, whether relating to the conduct, or to the secrets of mental history, was one to be enforced on the conscience of every female, and by an unmarried priesthood. To evade it, would be to incur the guilt of insincerity, self-reproach, and, in no few instances, the apprehensions of every future evil; while to act upon it was to conform to what could hardly fail to prove hostile to the best safeguard of female innocence. Nor is it easy to conceive, that confessors would always pass this ordeal untainted. To do so, they must be either more or less than human. That the morals of a community must suffer from this sort of intercourse is manifest; and whether the impurities of the clergy, so frequently deplored by Wycliffe, arose from this source, in a greater or a less degree, it is certain that their forced celibacy was the parent of vices which frequently roused his severest indignation. The guilty conduct of priests, with respect to "wives, "widows, and maidens," is said to lead to the frequent "murder of children." And the licentious practices of the higher clergy, are said to be but too faithfully copied by their dependants and

the laity. To have seen these vices as certainly consequent on the celibacy of churchmen, would have been enough, in the mind of Wycliffe, to have created a suspicion as to the real obligation of the law which imposed it. Such with him was the general effect of existing disorders. Where the abuses of a practice were more obvious than its uses, the closest examination of its origin and pretensions commonly followed.

On this article he thus writes. "Since fornication is so perilous, and priests are so frail, God ordained in the old law, that priests should have wives; and in the new law, never forbid it, neither by Christ nor by his apostles; but rather approved it. But now through the hypocrisy of fiends and of false men, many bind themselves to priesthood and chastity, and forsake those who by God's law are their wives, and injure maidens and wives, and fall into all vices most foully."<sup>84</sup> It required no little integrity and firmness, to avow such opinions, in

<sup>84</sup> MS. Of Wedded Men and Wives. While many are found assuming the office of "priests and religious," but to "live a lustful life," it is concluded that they must fall thus "into lechery in divers degrees, and into the sins against nature." Bodily marriage is defined, as "a sacrament, and a figure of the ghostly wedlock between Christ and the holy church," as St. Paul saith, and it is farther described as approved of God in Paradise, by the Saviour when on earth, and by his apostles, one of whom is said to have numbered the prohibition of marriage among the marks of the apostacy which should appear before the last day. It is nevertheless stated,

that "though matrimony be good, and greatly commended of God, clean virginity is much better, and the priests who keep clean chastity in body and soul do best. But many take this charge indiscreetly, and slander themselves greatly before God and his saints. So high and so noble is virginity, that Christ commanded it not generally, but said he who may, let him take it. So, also, St. Paul gave no command of virginity, but gave council to those who were equal thereto." Such was the unity of sentiment between the Apostle of the Gentiles and the English reformer. MS. Ibid.

CHAP. VIII. such an age. And yet we must admire the prudence and devotion, which prevented the reformer's availing himself of the full liberty of which he felt himself to be possessed in this respect. Had Wycliffe anticipated some of the most illustrious reformers of the sixteenth century, by becoming a married priest, the event, however innocent, would have been regretted by many as a circumstance, necessarily injurious to the enterprise in which he was engaged. By a more numerous class, such an occurrence would have been hailed with delight, as showing beyond controversy, that the reformer's disaffection to the church had arisen much less from her corruptions, than from the holy severity of her discipline. In the fourteenth century, this arch-weapon would have made an impression more disastrous than was produced by it at a later period.

On the sacraments.

We have seen that Wycliffe regarded marriage as a sacrament. His orthodoxy, however, on this, and some other formalities so designated, was rather apparent than real. By a sacrament, he understood "a token that may be seen, of a thing which may not be seen;"<sup>85</sup> and he admitted, with the church of Rome, that these were seven in number.<sup>86</sup> His doctrine relating to penance has been sufficiently explained. On the rite of baptism, Wycliffe thought with his contemporaries, both as to its mode, and its subjects. "It matters not," he observes, "whether the persons baptized, are dipped three times, or

<sup>85</sup> Trial. iv. 1.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. Dr. James suggests, that Wycliffe after a while admitted only

two sacraments; but his Trialogus is among his latest productions. See Apology for John Wickliffe.

“ have only water poured on their head.”<sup>87</sup> But CHAP.  
VIII. while the mode of baptism was regarded as thus indifferent, its administration, in some form, was deemed so far important, that the reformer adverts with approbation to the practice of allowing even females to perform that solemnity, rather than suffer an expiring infant to pass from the world unblessed by its influence. On the future state of an unbaptized infant, he confesses himself unable to determine any thing, but considers it “ as probable, that without this washing, Christ may “ spiritually baptize infants, and in consequence “ save them.”<sup>88</sup> We may regret the force of that superstition which could produce hesitation on this point even with such a mind. But these facts place the doctrine of Wycliffe relating to the mode and the subjects of baptism beyond dispute.

On the import of this rite, he remarks, that “ baptism with water,” is significant “ of baptism “ with the Spirit.” In the latter, God “ christeneth “ the souls of men, that is to say, washeth their “ souls from the uncleanness of all sin.” In one of his sermons, he observes, “ bodily baptizing “ is a figure, shewing how man’s soul should be “ baptized from sin. For the wisdom of Christ “ would not suffer us to keep this figure, except “ for some good reason. Bodily washing of a “ child, is not the end of baptizing ; but baptizing “ is a token of the washing of the soul from sin, “ both original and actual, by virtue taken of “ Christ’s death.”<sup>89</sup>

On confirmation, he remarks, that “ the oil Confirma-  
tion.

<sup>87</sup> Trialogus, iv. 12.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Hom. Bib. Reg. 165, 166, on Rom. chap. vi.

CHAP. “ with which the prelates anoint children at such  
 VIII. “ times ; and the linen hood, or veil put over  
 “ their head ; are a ceremony of little worth, and  
 “ one having no foundation in scripture.”<sup>90</sup> He  
 farther cautions such as may have placed an un-  
 due confidence in this service, that “ the child,  
 “ or man, receiveth not the gifts of the Holy  
 “ Spirit from the bishop, but as the gift of God.”  
 It is also stated, that “ it does not appear, that  
 “ this sacrament should be reserved to a Cesarean  
 “ prelacy ; that it would be more devout, and  
 “ more conformable to scripture language, to deny  
 “ that the bishops give the Holy Spirit, or confirm  
 “ the giving of it ; and that it therefore seems to  
 “ some, that the brief and trivial confirmation  
 “ of the prelates, and the ceremonies added to  
 “ it for the sake of pomp, were introduced at the  
 “ suggestion of Satan, that the people may be  
 “ deceived as to the faith of the church, and that  
 “ the state and necessity of bishops may be the  
 “ more acknowledged.”<sup>91</sup> At other times, he  
 complains of the importance conferred on this  
 service, as a disparagement of “ the more worthy  
 “ and needful sacraments.”<sup>92</sup>

Orders. Clerical ordination, he has defined as “ a power  
 “ conferred on a devout clerk by the ministry  
 “ of a bishop, that he may duly minister to the  
 “ church ;”<sup>93</sup> and the doctrine of the age is said  
 to be “ that a clerk is not ordained, except as a  
 “ bishop shall grant him the Holy Ghost, and  
 “ thus imprint a character on his mind which is

<sup>90</sup> *Triologus*, iv. 14.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> MS. Sentence of the Curse Ex-  
 pounded, c. vii.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*



“indelible, and accordingly, if a clerk be de-  
 “graded, or whatever else may happen to him,  
 “this character may not be lost.”<sup>94</sup> But this  
 tenet is regarded as inexplicable. As the cha-  
 racter so derived was frequently of little worth,  
 the reformer prays, that the clergy may receive  
 some more efficient grace from a higher source.  
 The power conferred by the authority of the pre-  
 lates, is viewed as having no necessary connexion  
 with that which the true priest receives from the  
 unseen Bishop of souls. Hence while the esta-  
 blished forms of ordination were acknowledged,  
 the character said to be conveyed by them was  
 regarded as subject to debate. The doctrine of  
 Wycliffe with respect to auricular confession has  
 been stated:<sup>95</sup> and his opinions on the supposed  
 sacrament of extreme unction, were deemed  
 equally heterodox.<sup>96</sup>

Much, too, has been said as to the reformer's  
 sentiments concerning the eucharist. The word  
 transubstantiation, was introduced to express the  
 changing of the bread and wine into the sub-  
 stance of the body and the blood of Christ. In  
 the writings of Wycliffe this doctrine is rejected  
 in almost every form of language. In his two  
 Confessions relating to this article, and in a multi-  
 tude of instances, the continuance of the material  
 elements, after the words of consecration were  
 pronounced, is distinctly asserted. Still it must  
 be acknowledged, that he sometimes speaks of a  
 presence of the Saviour, in connexion with the

<sup>94</sup> Trialogus, iv. 15.

<sup>95</sup> See p. 297—300.

<sup>96</sup> Walden accused him of heresy

on this point, ii. 268. James's Apo-  
 logy, c. viii. sect. iv.

The eucha-  
 rist.

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visible emblems, in a manner which, while it certainly does not amount to the impanation of Luther, is a slight remove from the statements of this doctrine which distinguished the creed of Zuinglius.<sup>97</sup> The language of hesitation and uncertainty is not often that of reformers, but this is one of those points on which Wycliffe was free to confess his ignorance. The matter, also, on which he found it impossible himself to decide, he regarded as forming no essential part of the christian faith, and as that, in consequence, on which every man should be left to the guidance of his own perceptions. It is in one of his latest pieces that he thus writes: "The mass is  
 "neither better for one priest nor another, for in  
 "its kind it is bread, nought amended by the  
 "priest, and inasmuch as it is God's body, it  
 "is like God, whosoever may consecrate it. But  
 "here we know many things which are no part  
 "of necessary faith, and which we should neither  
 "grant nor deny, hope nor doubt, but rather  
 "suppose them, or guess them." To illustrate

<sup>97</sup> In his *Conclusions*, published at Oxford, in the summer of 1381, it is not only transubstantiation, but "impanation, and demptification," which are denounced as having no support from the scriptures. To expose the contradictions, and the impossibilities attendant on the latter doctrines, is the purpose to which the eighth chapter in the last book of his *Triialogus* is devoted. By identification he professes to understand the uniting of two things previously distinct; as though by an act of Omnipotence Peter and Paul should cease to be two persons, and become one.

But he states, that with respect to the eucharist, he had "adduced many reasons to show that such an impanation is impossible." He also adds, "I am certain that the doctrine of impanation is impossible and heretical." As the humanity of Christ is not to be considered apart from his divinity, it is said to follow from the assertions of men respecting the identification of the body of Christ with the bread, "that a mere wafer becomes the Deity of Christ," and it is indignantly asked "what idolatry can be more completely detestable?"

his meaning, he presently observes: "Should  
 " the pope ask me if I were ordained to be saved, CHAP.  
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 " or predestinated, I would say that I hoped so ;  
 " but I would not swear it, nor affirm it without  
 " condition ; and though he should greatly punish  
 " me, yet would I neither deny it, nor doubt it,  
 " in any way. And so if prelates oppose me,  
 " inquiring what the sacrament of the altar is in  
 " its kind, I would say, *it is bread, the same that it*  
 " *was before*, since the gospel thus teaches, if we  
 " will believe." But to all questions beyond this,  
 his only answer is said to be, " I neither grant it,  
 " nor deny it, nor doubt it."<sup>98</sup>

While such were the reformer's sentiments con- On public  
worship.  
 cerning the recognized sacraments, it will not be  
 supposed, that the established ritual was in all  
 other respects according to his views of propriety.  
 The reformer's complaints, however, referred  
 chiefly to the subordinate place assigned in that  
 ritual to the office of preaching, to the abuse  
 of images, and to the idle fopperies frequently  
 obtruded upon religious assemblies by singers and  
 musicians. The manner of conducting the wor-  
 ship of God, which tended most to inform the  
 mind of the worshipper, and to improve his de-  
 votional affections, he often declares to be best.  
 This he considered to be most consonant with the  
 suggestions of reason, and with the matured  
 character distinguishing the present dispensation  
 of religion.<sup>99</sup> Still, to the period of his death, he

<sup>98</sup> MS. On the Seven Deadly Sins. Cod. Ric. Jamesii.

<sup>99</sup> MS. Of Contemplative Life. On Prelates, c. vi. In the latter treatise

the writer combats the arguments ad-  
 duced in favour of church music, from  
 the practice of the Old Testament  
 church, and from the visions of the

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appears to have conformed in these things to the customs of the age; attending to the various services connected with the festivals of the church, and rendering the gospels appointed to be read on such occasions the ground-work of his address to the people.<sup>100</sup>

On the sufficiency of the Scripture and the right of private judgment.

The reader has frequently seen, that with Wycliffe, something more than the decision of the church was necessary to determine the truth of religious doctrines. And this was the case with respect to doctrines much less mysterious than the article of transubstantiation. That the pontiffs were not raised above the influence of error, was believed to be demonstrated by many a melancholy fact; and that ecclesiastical councils had shewn themselves to be scarcely more worthy of confidence, was believed to be no less evident. Indeed, the whole of the reformer's conduct with regard to the papal power resulted from his conviction as to the sufficiency of the sacred scriptures, and as to the right of private judgment. It will be remembered, also, that in numerous extracts from his writings which appear in the pages of this work, these opinions are not more clearly assumed than expressed. The corruptions of the church are rarely exposed, without being

Apocalypse. It is laid down as an important maxim, that whatever is preferred in the worship of God, "to the hearing of his law, and of the "bliss of heaven," is an evil which should be suppressed. Augustine is also cited, as teaching that guilt is contracted as often as the sound becomes more attractive than the sense.

<sup>100</sup> Among his sermons are nearly

forty which were delivered on the saint-days observed in that age. One of the days so regarded was sacred to St. Thomas of Canterbury, another to the purification of the Chair of St. Peter, and another to the translation of St. Martin, (MS. C.C.C. Cambridge, Lewis, c. viii.) It should, however, be remarked, that the superstitions connected with such seasons, were fearlessly exposed in these discourses.

noticed, as showing the folly and impiety of supposing her visible guides to be infallible. In the following passage, Wycliffe records his judgment respecting the elements of which ecclesiastical councils were generally composed. “Worldly prelates make of themselves a congregation, and of clerks assenting to them,—some for worldly dread and worldly favours, some for gold, and the hope of benefices, and some for fear of the curse, or of the losing of benefices, or for dread of slander, imprisoning, and burning:”—but the conduct of such assemblies in vesting their own interpretations of holy writ, with the authority due to the record itself, is described as involving the guilt of blasphemy.<sup>101</sup> “The law of God, and of reason,” he observes, “we should follow more than that of our popes and cardinals; so much so, that if we had a hundred popes, and if all the friars were cardinals, to the law of the gospel we should bow, more than to all this multitude.”<sup>102</sup>

The last chapter in the third book of his *Dialogus*, is intended to demonstrate, that “the law of Christ infinitely exceeds all other laws.” It is there observed, that in the sacred scriptures, “all truth is either expressed or implied,” and it is said to follow, that “other writings can have worth or authority, only so far as their sentiment is derived from the scriptures.” This is

<sup>101</sup> MS. *How Satan and his Priests, and his Feigned Religious, &c. &c.*

<sup>102</sup> Cod. Ric. Jamesii. “The faith which served the church a thousand years while Satan was bound, will not serve it now he is loosed; hence

“these councils. And where the greater part of such men assent to any sentence, then all holy church shall know that to be gospel, and by this false principle the fiend beguileth men.” Ibid.

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stated as the doctrine of Augustine, and as including every thing necessary “to correct the  
“edicts of the papal court, and of the prelates,  
“and also the errors of the religious orders.” It is stated, also, that “the smooth covering under  
“which all the subtleties of Antichrist are concealed,” consists in imputing obscurity to the scriptures, with a view to introduce the rival authority of the priesthood. The chapter thus concludes: “I am certain, indeed, from the  
“scriptures, that neither Antichrist, nor all his  
“disciples, nay nor all fiends, may really impugn  
“any part of that volume, as it regards the excellence of its doctrine. But in all these things,  
“it appears to me, that the believing man should  
“use this rule—if he soundly understands the  
“sacred scripture, let him bless God; if he be  
“deficient in such a perception, let him labour  
“for soundness of mind. Let him also dwell  
“as a grammarian upon the letter, but be fully  
“aware of imposing a sense upon scripture, which  
“he doubts the Holy Spirit does not demand.  
“For such a man, according to St. Jerome, is  
“a heretic; and much more he, who rashly  
“blasphemes, by imposing a meaning on scripture, which the Spirit itself declares to be impossible.”<sup>103</sup>

It should be observed, however, that the right of private judgment, as asserted by Wycliffe, was

<sup>103</sup> The state of Wycliffe's mind in reference to this leading article of Protestantism, must of course have been variously implied in those parts of his writings which have been long before the public. But it appeared to

me important that some direct information should be obtained on a point of so much moment, and that the reformer should be allowed to speak to it for himself.—Note to the second edition.

not a liberty to reject established opinions without examination. On the contrary, patient inquiry, fervent prayer, and a disposition to comply with the requirements of scripture, whatever they may be, are constantly adverted to, as necessary qualifications in the case of every man who would study that volume so as to understand it. These sacred obligations are considered as devolving on every man discarding the authority of the church, and professing to make the scriptures the source of his sentiments, and the guide of his conduct.<sup>104</sup>

“ Poor priests, and true men,” says the reformer, “ would willingly yield obedience to God, and to holy church, and also to each man on earth, inasmuch as he teacheth truly the commandments of God, and things which may profit the souls of men. And no more ought any man to obey, even to Christ himself, both God and man. If any worldly prelate asketh more obedience than this, he surely is Antichrist, and Lucifer’s master. For Jesus Christ is the God of righteousness and truth, and of peace and

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<sup>104</sup> To the exposition of scripture four qualifications are noticed as important. An ability to collate manuscripts—an acquaintance with logic—the practice of comparing scripture with scripture—and above all, a consciousness of dependance on the promised assistance of the Spirit, the great Teacher. It is further said, that “ this illumination, so necessary to a full understanding of the word of God, is promoted by sanctity of life. This should theologians be studious to preserve, being careful that they invent nothing foreign to the faith of the scriptures.” And though his own expositions of scripture were

sometimes obscured by mysteries and allegory, it is his remark, that “ all things necessary in scripture are contained in its proper literal and historical sense,” and some men are said to be “ enlightened from above that they may so explain it.” Two rules are noticed as having aided him in distinguishing between the apocryphal and the canonical scriptures: 1st. To ascertain what books of the Old Testament are cited in the New. 2d. A comparison of the doctrines contained in any suspicious document with that inculcated in the scriptures of acknowledged authority. James’s Apology, c. i.



CHAP. "charity. He may not lie, nor deny himself.  
VIII.  
"How then, may any sinful prelate justly compel  
"men to do against righteousness, and the health  
"of their souls, and a good conscience? For  
"Christ saith in the gospel of St. John, that the  
"Son may do nothing but what he hath seen the  
"Father do, and Christ, therefore, commanded  
"all men, that they should believe on him, but  
"as he did the works of the Father. Why then  
"should christian men be compelled by the  
"clerks of Antichrist, to do after their command-  
"ments, while they do not the works of God, but  
"those of the fiend? And thus Christ speaketh  
"to the Jews, and asketh, why they believe not  
"on him, if he saith the truth? And hence, he  
"also saith, who of you shall reprove me of sin?  
"And he would that any man had done so, if he  
"might in truth. Hence, also, at the time of  
"his passion, he said to the bishop's servant who  
"smote him on the face, 'If I have done evil,  
"bear thou witness of the evil.' And thus, if  
"prelates are vicars of Christ, they ought to  
"follow him in their terms of obedience, and to  
"ask no more of any man than he did." It is  
added, that Christ, who was "both God and man,  
"sought the souls of men, lost through sin, thirty  
"years and more, in great labour and weariness,  
"and many pains, travelling on his feet many  
"thousand miles in the cold, and storm, and  
"tempest!" And it is demanded, whether any  
"sinful idiot," because vested by human power  
with ecclesiastical jurisdiction, may justly exact  
"more obedience than did Christ and his apo-  
"stles." In the same treatise it is remarked, that

“ Christ hath said in his gospel, that if the blind  
 “ lead the blind, they fall both into the lake. CHAP.  
VIII.  
 “ Now these worldly prelates are blind in God’s  
 “ law, both in their knowledge of it, and in the  
 “ life they live; and accordingly, no man should  
 “ be led by them, for fear lest they both fall into  
 “ hell from their ignorance of holy writ.”<sup>105</sup> Cen-  
 suring the too prevalent custom, of putting “ the  
 “ bidding of God behind, and the bidding of sinful  
 “ man before,” he remarks, “ let prelates study  
 “ busily and truly holy writ, and live openly  
 “ hereafter, and destroy the open sin of other  
 “ men; and poor priests, and christian men,  
 “ without any summoning, would willingly come  
 “ to them, at any cost or labour, by land or  
 “ water, and would meekly do them obedience  
 “ and reverence, as they would to Peter and  
 “ Paul. Let the world judge then, whether  
 “ these dissensions belong to worldly prelates,  
 “ ignorant in themselves, and cursed in life, or to  
 “ poor priests, and true men, who desire night  
 “ and day to know the will of God, to honour it,  
 “ and before all things to do it.”<sup>106</sup>

<sup>105</sup> MS. How Men should find  
 Priests. “ In reason, the nature of  
 “ any spiritual office consisting in in-  
 “ struction in truth, and guidance in  
 “ virtue toward attainment of salva-  
 “ tion; if any man doth lead into per-  
 “ nicious error or impiety, he thereby  
 “ ceaseth to be capable of such office;  
 “ as a blind man by being so, doth  
 “ cease to be a guide. No man can  
 “ be bound to follow any one into the  
 “ ditch, or to obey any one to the  
 “ prejudice of his own salvation. If  
 “ any pastor should teach bad doc-  
 “ trine or prescribe bad practice, the

“ people may reject and disobey him.”  
 Barrow’s Works, i. 744.

<sup>106</sup> MS. De Obedientia Prelatorum.  
 “ Christian men say truly that they  
 “ would not wilfully or wittingly de-  
 “ serve the curse of God for any good  
 “ either in earth or heaven; neither  
 “ that of man, in as far as it accordeth  
 “ with the righteous sentence of God.  
 “ But with great joy of soul, they will  
 “ rather suffer man’s wrongful curse,  
 “ than wittingly or wilfully break any  
 “ one commandment of God. Thereby  
 “ the honours of this world, and a  
 “ keeping of the body in all indulgence

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Summary of  
his theolo-  
gical doc-  
trine.

Of Wycliffe's theological doctrine, the reader will have formed his judgment from the passages inserted in the preceding chapters, and especially from those supplied by the reformer's homilies, and by his exposition of the decalogue.<sup>107</sup> No language can be more explicit, than that in which he asserts the dependence of man for the remission of his sins, on the satisfaction made for them by the obedience and death of Christ. It is declared that to the "one offering" presented on the cross, every descendant of Adam must be indebted,—not in part merely, but entirely—for the removal of his guilt. It is at the same time affirmed, that this highest token of the divine approbation is most assuredly awarded to every penitent believer, however condemned by a degenerate priesthood. If there be passages in which the reformer speaks of men as "deserving" the blessedness of a future world, we have heard him explain the sense in which he employed such language; and we have seen his protest against its being interpreted as at variance with the doctrine which regards the salvation of the soul as being in every view of it purely the work of God.<sup>108</sup>

A prominent article in his religious creed, and one from which the rest were all more or less deduced, was the election of grace. The true church, is accordingly described as composed of predestinated persons, and of such alone. "We

" may be secured. But they would  
" rather sufferslander, and back-biting,  
" and imprisonment, and exile, and  
" with the help and grace of God,  
" hanging, drawing and quartering,

" and burning, than to forsake thus  
" the example of Christ, and the truth  
" of holy writ." Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> See Vol. I. Chap. iii. II. Chap. i.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. p. 33.

“are predestinated,” he remarks, “that we may  
 “obtain divine acceptance, and become holy; CHAP.  
VIII.  
 “having received that grace through the huma-  
 “nity of Christ, by which we are rendered finally  
 “pleasing to God. And to me it appears, that  
 “this grace, which is called the grace of pre-  
 “destination, or the charity of final perseverance,  
 “cannot by any means fail.”<sup>109</sup> In the same  
 work, he endeavours to shew that there is no in-  
 consistency in regarding men as elected by their  
 Maker from before the foundation of the world,  
 though their existence then could only be in the  
 mind or purpose of the Deity. To the question,  
 what is the real cause of the decrees of God, it is  
 replied, “the will of God, or even God himself.”<sup>110</sup>  
 In the *Dialogus*, indeed, similar speculations fre-  
 quently occur. Nor was it the salvation of men  
 only, but the events of time in general, which  
 were viewed as the certain result of pre-ordination.  
 It is in the following manner that he reasons on  
 this subject. “If Christ prophesied of certain  
 “events, as certainly to come, such events have  
 “been or will be. The antecedent, namely that  
 “Christ has thus prophesied, is necessary, and  
 “the consequence is also necessary. The con-  
 “sequence is not in the power of any man, or  
 “of any creature; nor are the sayings of Christ,  
 “or the elections of his mind to be affected by  
 “accident. And therefore as it is necessary that  
 “Christ has foretold certain things, so it is neces-  
 “sary they should come to pass. By arguments  
 “of this kind also, we shew other events to  
 “be necessary, the coming of which has been

<sup>109</sup> *Trial*. iii. 7.<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*. ii. 14.

CHAP. VIII. "determined by God. Nor will it matter, after  
 " what manner God may choose to inform us,  
 " that he had actually so determined, before the  
 " foundation of the world. Let it be certain, that  
 " God has predetermined an event, and the result  
 " is beyond all accident, it must follow. Now  
 " what could hinder this pre-ordination of events  
 " on the part of God? His knowledge is perfect.  
 " His will is unvarying. And all creature-impedi-  
 " ments opposed to him are futile. From these  
 " facts, it follows that whatsoever is future, must  
 " necessarily come."<sup>111</sup> The sum of Wycliffe's  
 doctrine on this point, appears to have been, that  
 the divine nature necessarily purposes what is  
 best with respect to the universe; and as the vo-  
 litions of the Eternal Mind must necessarily affect  
 all the matters over which the Divine prescience  
 extends, a law of necessity must in consequence  
 descend upon all things. Acute, however, as  
 were the reformer's reasonings on such topics, I  
 am constrained to think that the perplexities with  
 which he often bewildered his opponents, must  
 have been sometimes felt by himself. In his  
 English compositions such speculations are not of  
 frequent occurrence, rarely obtaining more than  
 a passing notice. But that they were not re-  
 garded by Wycliffe, as having the least tendency  
 to impair the feeling of responsibility in men, or  
 to efface the distinctions between vice and virtue,  
 is placed beyond doubt by the facts of his history,  
 and by the general sentiment of his writings.

The remaining articles of his creed are of a  
 more practical character, and more frequently

<sup>111</sup> Trial. iii. 9.

announced. To the scheme of spiritual power so long established in connexion with the see of Rome, and to the many delusions which had facilitated the introduction of the laws of penance, and the customs of pilgrimage, he opposed the simple, but sublime doctrine, of a free remission of sin, in virtue of the atonement made by Jesus Christ. To guard this doctrine also from abuse, he was equally bold in declaring that the penitent only could be assured of pardon; and that God is more willing to confer the grace of penitence, and all the elements of a heavenly temper, than we are to seek them. "Marvellous," he observes, "it is that any sinful being dare grant any thing to another on the merit of saints. For without the grace and the power of Christ's passion, all that any saint ever did, may not bring a soul to heaven." That grace and passion are, at the same time, described as including "all merits which are needful."<sup>112</sup> The last day, he remarks, will show, that the judgment of the Supreme is not to be at all influenced by the often mistaken views of men; and he concludes by praying, that "the Almighty, of his endless charity, would destroy the pride, covetousness, hypocrisy, and heresy, discovered by these pretended pardons, and make men earnest to keep his commandments, and to set their trust fully in Jesus Christ."<sup>113</sup> What the reformer meant by thus trusting in Christ, he frequently explains. In his comment on the passage respecting the brazen serpent, he thus writes. "Here we must know the story of the old law.

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VIII.<sup>112</sup> MS. On Prelates, c. xiii.<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

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“How the people were hurt by the stinging of  
“adders. And Moses prayed God to tell him  
“a medicine, and God made him take an adder  
“of brass, and raising it high on a tree for the  
“people to look to, to tell them that those who  
“looked on that adder should be healed. And  
“all this was a figure of Christ’s hanging on the  
“cross. He was in the form of the venomous  
“adder; but in his own person was no venom,  
“even as the adder of brass had no venom in it.  
“But as a right looking on that adder of brass  
“saved the people from the venom of serpents,  
“so a right looking by full belief on Christ saveth  
“his people.”<sup>114</sup> It follows, therefore, that  
“Christ died not for his own sins, as thieves die  
“for theirs; but as our brother, who himself  
“might not sin, he died for the sins that others  
“had done. The righteousness of God, there-  
“fore, and his grace, and the salvation of men,  
“all thus moved Christ to die.”<sup>115</sup> Such pas-  
sages prepare us for the reformer’s more definite  
statements on this article, as when he affirms  
that without faith it is impossible to please God;  
that the virtuous deeds of the unbelieving are  
devoid of a principle of righteousness; that faith  
in the Redeemer is sufficient to salvation, and  
that without the admixture of other causes; and  
that men are righteous only by a participation in  
the Saviour’s righteousness.<sup>116</sup>

Nearly allied to the doctrine of justification  
by faith, is that of sanctification by the agency of  
the Divine Spirit; and in the writings of Wycliffe,

<sup>114</sup> Hom. Bib. Reg.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. 103.

<sup>116</sup> De Veritate Scripturæ Expos. Dec. James’s Apology.



they hold that relation to each other, which we find allotted to them in the sacred scriptures. CHAP.  
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The text which affirms that with respect to the duties of piety, "our sufficiency is wholly of God," is thus treated. "Since among the works of man, thinking would seem to be most in his power; and yet, even his thoughts must be received from God, much more is it so with the other works of men. And thus should we put off pride, and wholly trust in Jesus Christ. For he who may nought *think* of himself, may *do* nought of himself. Thus all our sufficiency is of God, through the mediation of Jesus Christ."<sup>117</sup> It is afterwards observed, that "thus of sinful and ungrateful men, God maketh good men, and all the goodness in this cometh of God. Nor trouble we about any farther cause, since God himself is certainly the first cause."<sup>118</sup> But with statements of this description, a multitude of which might be selected from his sermons, there are others of a more modified class, though by no means inconsistent with them, which occur with still greater frequency. All men, it is remarked, should be admonished, that they receive not the grace of God in vain; since, in every instance, where such conduct is exhibited, "the default is not in God, but all the default is in his servants."<sup>119</sup> Again, it is said, that "God withdraweth not his grace, except man shall abuse it; and then the righteousness of God requireth that the sinner should be punished."<sup>120</sup> These passages viewed

<sup>117</sup> Hom. Bib. Reg. 104.<sup>118</sup> Ibid. 17.<sup>119</sup> Hom. Bib. Reg. 17.<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

CHAP. together, may remind the reader of the apostle's  
 VIII. language, "work out your own salvation with fear  
 "and trembling, for it is God who worketh in  
 "you, to will and to do of his good pleasure."<sup>121</sup>  
 It is evident, also, that this supernatural aid was  
 understood by the reformer as extended to all  
 men, so as to render the condemnation of the  
 finally impenitent the just consequence of resist-  
 ing the light from above. Thus pursuing a com-  
 parison between the advent of Christ, and the  
 dawning of the day, he remarks, "It is now a  
 "great sin not to arise and to throw open our  
 "windows, for this spiritual light is ready to  
 "shine unto all men who will open to receive  
 "it."<sup>122</sup> The doctrine of Wycliffe, therefore was,  
 that the men who are saved from the power of  
 their natural depravity, as well as from the burden  
 of their guilt, are thus saved simply according to  
 the grace of God; and yet that the mysterious  
 arrangements of heaven are such, that wherever  
 final ruin happens, the lost will be found to  
 have been the agents of their own destruction.  
 To the difficulties of this creed the reformer could  
 not have been insensible, but it was evidently  
 regarded as that of the scriptures, and as exposed  
 to less objection than any other that might be  
 proposed in its room.

It is plain from these extracts, and from others  
 in some preceding chapters of this work, that  
 Melancthon could have known little of Wycliffe's  
 theological productions, when describing him as  
 "ignorant of the righteousness of faith."<sup>123</sup> If

<sup>121</sup> Phil. ii. 12, 13.

<sup>122</sup> Hom. Bib. Reg. 17.

<sup>123</sup> Wycliffe is further accused by  
 this writer, of holding seditious no-

by that doctrine he meant a reliance on the atonement of Christ as the only and the certain medium of acceptance for the guilty, it is unquestionable that this truth was the favourite, and the most efficient article in the faith of the English, as well as in that of the German reformer. It must be acknowledged that this tenet is more frequently adverted to in the writings of Luther, than in those of Wycliffe; and his notices respecting it are frequently more definite, because distinguishing more commonly between the acceptance of offenders in virtue of the Saviour's death, and the growth of devout affections in the heart under the influence of the Divine Spirit. But that such was the design of the Redeemer's sacrifice, was not more distinctly apprehended by the professor of Wittenburgh, than by the rector of Lutterworth; nor was this truth the source of a more permanent or delightful confidence with the one than with the other. The Spirit of God is at the same time contemplated as the source of all those influences which lead the mind to a knowledge of the truth, which nourish it in all the graces of piety, and by which men are prepared to bear the cross of the confessor and

tions in politics, and of being obscure in the matter of the eucharist. This opinion is stated as the result of "*looking into Wycliffe.*" It is obviously the effect of a very partial attention to the reformer's statements. On the principles of civil government, and on the sacrament of the altar, the rector of Lutterworth differed from Luther and Melancthon, only as being more enlightened. As a question of the reason, the consubstantiation of the Lutheran church is scarcely a remove from the

transubstantiation of the papacy: and we have seen the firmness with which both were rejected by our countryman. His views of civil government are also before the reader. But were it possible to vindicate his name, in these particulars, still more clearly, he has opponents who would not fail to reiterate these charges as those of Melancthon, and as though no man had ever dared to question their truth. Lewis, c. viii.

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the martyr. Frequently, indeed, the word salvation is employed as comprehending the articles of justification and sanctification. This, we know, is the manner of the sacred writers. But if to distinguish between these essential parts of the christian redemption, is to regard the first as proceeding exclusively from the atonement of Christ, and the second as flowing entirely from the grace of the Spirit; if it be also to view the one as consisting in a change of relation to God, and the other as including an assimilation of the spirit of man to that of the Redeemer—then these doctrines, and the difference between these doctrines, was far from being unperceived by Wycliffe.

It is in the following language that he describes the self-denial and devotedness which the gospel requires of its sincere disciples. “Christ not  
“compelling, but freely counselling every man to  
“seek a perfect life saith, ‘Let him deny himself,  
“and take up his cross and follow me.’ Let us  
“then deny ourselves in whatever we have made  
“ourselves by sin; and such as we are made by  
“grace, let us continue. If a proud man be con-  
“verted to Christ, and is made humble, he hath  
“denied himself. If a covetous man ceaseth to  
“covet, and giveth of his own to relieve the  
“needy, he hath denied himself. If an impure  
“man changeth his life and becometh chaste, he  
“hath denied himself, as St. Gregory saith. He  
“who withstandeth and forsaketh the unreason-  
“able will of the flesh denieth himself. The  
“cross of Christ is taken when we shrink not from  
“contempt, for the love of the truth; when man

“ is crucified unto the world, and the world is <sup>CHAP.</sup>  
“ crucified unto him, and he setteth its joy at <sup>VIII.</sup>  
“ nought. It is not enough to bear the cross  
“ of a painful life, except we follow Christ in his  
“ virtues, in meekness, love, and heavenly desire.  
“ He taketh the cross who is ready to meet all  
“ peril for God ; if need be to die rather than  
“ to forsake Christ. And whoso taketh not thus  
“ the cross, and followeth not Christ thus, is not  
“ worthy to be his disciple.—Lord Jesus, turn us  
“ to thee, and we shall be turned ! Heal thou us,  
“ and then we shall be verily holy ; for without  
“ grace and help from thee, may no man be truly  
“ turned or healed. For they are but scorers,  
“ who to-day turn to God, and to-morrow turn  
“ away ; who to-day do their penance, and to-  
“ morrow turn again to their former evils. What  
“ is turning to God ? Nothing but turning from  
“ the world, from sin, and from the fiend. What  
“ is turning from God, but turning to the changing  
“ things of this world, to delight in the creatures,  
“ the lusts of the flesh, and the works of the fiend ?  
“ To be turned from the world, is to set at nought  
“ its joys, and to suffer meekly, all bitterness,  
“ slanders, and deceits, for the love of Christ. To  
“ leave all occupations unlawful and unprofitable  
“ to the soul, so that man’s will and thought  
“ become dead to the things which the world  
“ loveth and worshippeth.” The devices of Satan  
with which all have to contend, are said, in the  
conclusion, to be particularly directed against  
such as really aspire to this state of sanctity.  
“ He studieth to bring against us all manner of  
“ temptations and tribulations, according as he

CHAP. " seeth that by the mercy of God, we are escaped  
 VIII. " out of his power. For he seeketh nothing so  
 " much as to separate men from the pure and the  
 " everlasting love of Jesus Christ, and to make  
 " them love perishing things, and the uncleanness  
 " of this world."<sup>124</sup>

I have ventured to remark, that had Wycliffe been a less devout man than such passages shew him to have been, he would not, perhaps, have been deserted by certain of his political adherents. It is equally probable, that had his zeal been directed to devotional topics alone, as was the case with Bradwardine, St. Edmund, and others, his days might have passed in comparative tranquillity. But he extended the range of his theological inquiries much farther than such persons had done, and applied his doctrine so as to annihilate the papal scheme of merit. It was thus he sought the religious improvement of mankind; and it was in doing this, that he wittingly braved the worst evils which the malice of his opponents could inflict.

<sup>124</sup> MS. Of Perfect Life. This extract, and all the extracts breathing the same devotional spirit that occur in the course of these volumes have been concealed in manuscript from the fourteenth century to the present time. So little indeed has been published relating immediately to Wycliffe's feeling with regard to piety, that the authors of our most popular Church History appear much more inclined to regard him as a restless politician than as a devout man. This may be attributed in part to that kind of pre-

judice which is too often apparent in the narrative of these writers. I am disposed, however, to attribute their defective and contradictory account of our reformer, rather to a want of adequate attention to the information really before them, and still more to the little direct reference to devout affections in that portion of Wycliffe's writings then known through the medium of the press. — Note to the second edition. See Milner's History of the Church of Christ, *ubi supra*.

## CHAPTER IX.

*Observations on the Character of Wycliffe, and on the Connexion of his Doctrine with the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century.*

WYCLIFFE'S CLAIM TO ORIGINALITY.—HIS LEARNING, AND INTELLECTUAL CHARACTER.—HIS PATRIOTISM AND LOVE OF MANKIND.—HIS PIETY.—LUTHER AND WYCLIFFE COMPARED.—THE BONES OF WYCLIFFE BURNT.—STATE OF THE REFORMED DOCTRINE IN ENGLAND, FROM THE DECEASE OF WYCLIFFE TO THE AGE OF LUTHER.—ACCESSION OF THE HOUSE OF LANCASTER.—CHARACTER OF THE PERSECUTIONS SANCTIONED BY HENRY THE FOURTH.—THE DOCTRINE OF WYCLIFFE SURVIVES THEM.—THE MARTYRDOM OF LORD COBHAM.—CONCLUSION.

THE later descendants of the Waldenses have frequently cheered the gloom of their poverty and seclusion by reflecting, that “the mother church of all reformed and protestant churches,”<sup>1</sup> found her asylum for ages in their native fastnesses. But if we look attentively to the page of history, it will be evident that the Great Protector of the faithful, depends as little on localities, as on persons, in preserving his truth, amid the convulsions of the world. Thus it is in a very different country from that chiefly occupied by the disciples of Peter Waldo, and among a far different people, that Wycliffe becomes a reformer. This happened, also, long before any favourable impression could well have been made upon his

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Wycliffe's  
claim to  
originality.

<sup>1</sup> Bresse, Hist. Vaudois, c. ii.



CHAP. mind, as to the claims of the men, who had made  
IX. — so noble a stand against the errors of the papacy  
in the vallies of Piedmont. Nor does it appear  
even to the close of the reformer's history, that he  
was materially aided by the story of those early  
advocates of primitive christianity. A few im-  
perfect notices do indeed occur respecting them,  
in some of his latest compositions, and such as  
indicate that he had learned to regard them as  
a devout people, who had suffered much from the  
tyranny of Rome. But though constantly refer-  
ring to the sources of his information with respect  
to religious opinions, and evidently concerned to  
shield his doctrine from the charge of novelty, by  
giving to it as wide a previous existence as pos-  
sible, no acknowledgment of obligation to the  
sectaries of the continent can be found in his  
works. We have seen also, that in that kind of  
resistance which he so vigorously sustained, he  
was left without the aid of precedent from the  
history of his own country. Those errors of  
the established system which he held to the last,  
imply the independence of his mind, no less than  
the particulars in which he dissented from it.  
His opinions as to an intermediate state, the cus-  
toms of patronage, and the authority of the magis-  
trate with respect to the affairs of the church,  
were not of Waldensian origin, but were pre-  
cisely such, as from the nature of his early con-  
nexions and pursuits, might have been expected  
to survive the departure of other opinions, which  
we find him successively discarding. On the  
appearance of such a luminary in a benighted  
land, the general conclusion appears to be, that

its lustre must have been attracted from some more favoured region. But is not this to think defectively of the providence of God, and of the power of his word and Spirit? The writings of the more enlightened of the fathers, and the pages of inspiration, were familiar to Wycliffe at an early period; and to the end of his career, these were almost exclusively his guides. Hence, in opposing the spiritual power of the popes, and certain doctrinal corruptions of the hierarchy, the reformer evidently regards himself as associated with the devout men of very remote times, but as standing almost alone amidst the generations which had appeared since the fatal period of Satan's enlargement.

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In judging of his learning, and of his intellectual character, whether we adopt the testimony of his friends or of his enemies, we must consider him as being, in these respects, the most extraordinary man of his day. Compared, indeed, with the present state of scholarship, his attainments would be far from pre-eminent; but to judge correctly of these they must be viewed in connexion with the age in which he lived. His election to the chair of theology in the principal seminary of this kingdom, bespeaks his proficiency in the science of the schoolmen; and the reluctant testimony of opponents, in common with his numerous writings, afford additional evidence of the industry and acuteness which he brought to that department of study. His appointment also, as the representative of the sovereign in the negotiation with the papal delegates at Bruges, will be allowed to suggest that his

His learning.

CHAP. acquaintance with the laws of his country, and of  
 IX. the church, was deemed worthy of confidence, on  
 the most difficult and important of the questions then at issue, between the English monarchs and the see of Rome. To such acquirements—which, indeed, with the more studious of the clergy, were in general the object of ardent pursuit—Wycliffe added a knowledge of the sacred scriptures which was peculiar to himself. Other schoolmen may have possessed much of his familiarity with the subtleties of their boasted philosophy, and with the writings of the fathers; and others may have been his rivals in the study of the civil, or of the canon law; but it was the combination of his attainments, on all these points, together with his sound scriptural knowledge, which rendered him so illustrious in the esteem of his followers, and so much an object of apprehension to the abettors of existing corruptions. It is not pretended that his taste was free from the barbarism which pervaded the literature of the period; nor that his authorities are always the most pertinent that might have been adduced; nor that they are given, in every instance, with all the caution that was desirable. But it may be affirmed that his learning, which was unusual in its variety, was no less so in the degree of its correctness, including more, perhaps, of truth and wisdom, than may be discovered in the opinions of any other man exposed to the same disadvantages.

His intellectual character.

It is evident, also, that to separate in so great a measure between the strength and weakness of established doctrines, required the application of no common energy, and the possession of much

ingenuousness and courage. In the christianity which prevailed around him, the pure faith of the gospel was superseded by a multitude of groveling superstitions; its simple ritual had given place to heathen and childish ceremonies almost without end; and its ministers, from being the shepherds of the flock of Christ, had become the members of a worldly hierarchy, nearly all the tendencies of which, were to wed the communities beneath them to ignorance and irreligion. So artfully, too, had this scheme been constructed, that the delinquent priest, however much delinquent, was almost secure from the approach of chastisement. On this state of things centuries had shed their influence, only to render its continuance the more probable, and the prospects of the human race more foreboding. Unawed, however, by the force of popular and long established opinions, Wycliffe ventured to publish the faith of the scriptures, condemning the frauds and superstitions by which it had been disfigured or concealed. The simple and forgotten modes of worship which the same authority enjoins, he often ventured to inculcate. And having thus restored religion to its place in the reason and the affections, he called upon all the hierarchies of Christendom, and on the pontiff, and his cardinals at their head, to relinquish their worldly occupations, and the incumbrances of wealth, and to expect the preservation of their influence on earth, only as their maxims and temper should be known to breathe the spirit of heaven! Against certain points in this bold theory, many objections might be urged; but it is, nevertheless, one, which no common mind would have had

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power to conceive. By a few, all its parts were hailed as devout and wise ; by more, it was only partially approved ; and by a greater number it was denounced as the madness of revolutionary zeal. But while subject to the imputation of every motive that might serve to cover his name and his tenets with odium ; and while threatened with the heaviest penalties which the native clergy or the papal power could impose ; the only change in the conduct of Wycliffe, from the period of first announcing his obnoxious doctrines to the last hours of his life, is that they are repeated with a growing constancy, and with a still louder emphasis. We may admire the courage by which the cords that had bound so many generations were thus broken ; and not less remarkable must have been the vigour which sustained the purpose of the reformer, amid the storm which lowered early, and increased in darkness and violence to the moment of his death. It was his more penetrating conception of the nature of religion, and of the principles involved in the papal ascendancy, which led him to surpass such men as Grossteste, and Fitz Ralph, whose attacks were limited to the outworks of the apostacy ; and, at the same time, to put at defiance the charge of Manicheism, which had been generally preferred, often unjustly, but always with too much success, against the continental reformers. So comprehensive, indeed, were his views of christianity, and of the claims of his species, that the movements which have been most favourable to the diffusion of scriptural piety, or of general knowledge, in later times, might be shewn to have been the

result, in no few instances, of adopting maxims which John de Wycliffe laboured to inculcate. CHAP.  
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It is a part of his praise, therefore, that he was a sincere lover of his country, and of the human race. He sought, indeed, to eradicate opinions which an extended ancestry had revered as true, and to reform or abolish institutions which they had designated sacred. Nor is he free from the charge of employing harsh language, when encountering opponents who were regarded as the criminal abettors of erroneous doctrine. But it is not less true, that his innovations, and the frequent severity of his language, were generally the result of honourable and even of kindly motives. Churchmen, he often taught, should be the chief benefactors of the states of Christendom; but he affirms, that they had long proved the chief obstacle in the way of its religious and social improvement; and he loved his species too well, not to visit their most injurious oppressors with his sharpest rebuke. His invectives, however, were marked by calmness and refinement, when compared with those which were sometimes directed against himself by his adversaries.<sup>2</sup> This

His patriotism and his philanthropy.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Lingard more than once adverts to the "coarseness" of Wycliffe's invectives. It is proper that the reader should know what claims to refinement pertained to his adversaries. The clerical historian, Walsingham, accompanies his notice of the reformer's death with the following mild description of his character. "The devil's instrument, church's enemy, people's confusion, heretic's idol, hypocrite's mirror, schism's broacher, hatred's sore, lies' forger, flatteries' sink, who at his death de-

"spaired like Cain, and stricken by  
"the horrible judgments of God,  
"breathed forth his wicked soul to  
"the dark mansion of the black devil."  
The opponents of Wycliffe, and of his followers, frequently taxed their invention thus; and the reformer sometimes attempted a vindication of his own conduct by appealing to the irony of Elijah when encountering the priests of Baal. (Hom. Bib. Reg.) But he appears to have forgotten that where the claim to inspiration is relinquished, the precedent fails.

CHAP. manner of writing, so justly offensive to us, be-  
IX. longed to the age, more than to the man. It  
may be remarked also, that a more compromising  
temper, and a more dispassionate mode of attack,  
would perhaps have failed to arrest any deep  
attention, or to meet successfully, the yet coarser  
modes of resistance with which he was obliged  
to contend. The disease was desperate, and had  
long baffled all milder treatment. That the re-  
form which he contemplated would be conducive  
in the highest degree to the welfare of his country,  
and of human nature, was in his judgment un-  
questionable. In his view it was a change which  
would turn the resources of every state into their  
proper channel, and confer on every christian man  
a freedom of access to the fountain of truth, and  
his long lost right to deduce his creed from the  
scriptures alone, and to regulate his hopes and  
fears solely by that authority. Nor was it the  
least advantage among those which were expected  
to result from the projected innovation, that it  
would render the civil sword, in every land, the  
foe of the vicious, and the friend of the devout.  
That an odious and destructive vassalage had  
been imposed on the human mind by the papal  
power, was believed to be as little problematical  
as human existence; and with all the energy of  
such a conviction, Wycliffe called upon the  
enslaved to arise and be free. That sentimental  
kind of deference for the faith of remote gene-  
rations, which is often indulged at the cost of the  
most serious obligations with respect to the living  
and unborn, he appears not at all to have com-  
prehended. The past was reviewed to imbibe



its truth, and the future was anticipated that he might become its benefactor. It should be noticed, also, that almost the only credible tradition preserved in the town of Lutterworth, as illustrating the character of Wycliffe, describes him as most exemplary in his parochial duties, devoting a portion of the morning in each day to relieving the necessitous, and ministering the consolations of religion to the aged, the sick, and the dying. It was thus he united the commanding faculties which anticipated a reform of christianity more complete than the genius of protestantism in the sixteenth century ventured to contemplate, with that obscure condescension and assiduity which became the pastor of a village cure.

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This consistency, so strictly pervading the character of our reformer, will hardly admit of explanation, except as arising from religious principle. Under that influence, he might learn to suspect the purity of his zeal, if directed against the magnificent and the powerful, to the neglect of services much more retired and humble in their character, but equally his duty. An attention to social obligation, so minute as to fill up almost every interstice within its circle, should be considered as bespeaking a consciousness of that Presence which is in every place, and which enforces its claims with the same authority in all places. Such motives, also, are alone sufficient to explain the constancy of Wycliffe, in adhering to a cause, which, long before his death, must have been seen as allied to almost every kind of privation and suffering. His doctrines with respect to ecclesiastical office and emolument,

His piety.

CHAP. swept away the possibility of his acquiring  
IX. — wealth, or of his possessing any authority in his own order, except such as should be inseparable from the weight of his character. Accordingly, a sentiment which he frequently reiterated was, “if we hope to be rewarded in this life, our hope of heavenly bliss perisheth.”<sup>3</sup> In another discourse, he remarks, “Christ came into the world to bear witness to the truth, and to enlighten the world. And as Christ, God and man, came hither with this intent, should not the truth keep his disciples, while standing thus for its defence, labouring even unto death? Christ, and the Baptist, and many more, had not their reward here for doing this; but in heaven they have bliss, hidden from men.”<sup>4</sup> Of such force, indeed, were these religious convictions, that through life they appear to have imparted a melancholy tendency to his mind, which it required all his watchfulness and spirituality to counteract. In defence of the undue importance attached to singing as a part of public worship, and especially to vindicate the aid of instrumental music in such services, it was usual to remark, that, in the visions of heaven, such employments are exhibited as engaging the chief attention of the blessed. To this it was sorrowfully answered, that heaven is indeed the place of praise, while the earth is, and ought to be, “a valley of weeping.”<sup>5</sup> To justify this gloomy feeling, he adds at another time; “if a man bethink him how the will of God is reversed by sin, which reigneth

<sup>3</sup> Hom. Bib. Reg. 154.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 174.

<sup>5</sup> MS. Of Feigned Contemplative Life.

“ in the world, both in persons and communities, CHAP. IX.  
 “ he shall have matter enough for mourning, and  
 “ little reason to be glad.”<sup>6</sup> And such appears to have been the habit of his mind. During my long familiarity with his writings, he has often been present to my imagination, as roused into a state of holy displeasure, as oppressed with grief, or moved by compassion ; but judging of him by his works, it is difficult to suppose that his brow was often cheered by a smile, or that his heart was often the seat of any feeling which had not a strong mixture of the sorrowful. Degenerate, however, as the world had become, his benevolence never forsakes its people ; and deeply as christianity was corrupted, no shade of apprehension would appear to have crossed his mind as to its native truth and excellence. Rarely does he conclude a composition, however brief, without recording a fervent prayer for the blessing of God on its design ; and as rarely does he advert to his sufferings, without expressing his gratitude to the Author of the gospel for the encouragements afforded in that record of mercy. The impression, indeed, which must be made by a candid and adequate attention to the history and writings of Wycliffe, is not only that his piety was that of the scriptures, but that it resulted from a strength of faith, and was distinguished by an unearthliness of feeling, which are of no frequent occurrence in the annals of the church.

In the school of the reformers, the precedence in honour has been generally given to Martin Luther, and perhaps there is not another indi- Comparison of Luther and Wycliffe.

<sup>6</sup> Of Feigned Contemplative Life.

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vidual in that distinguished class of men, who may be compared with him to so little disadvantage as John de Wycliffe. Both were nursed in the superstitions which they were destined to oppose, and both passed by slow and unanticipated steps to the adoption of their final sentiments. They were also devout men from their youth, and before meditating any hostile movement with respect to the hierarchy, were in some degree aware of its abuses. But the claim to originality and enterprise, must be certainly awarded to the Englishman. Germany had never ceased to be the asylum of separatists from the Romish communion, which was far from being the case with England; and the disputes between our monarchs and the papacy were partial, and soon terminated, when compared with those which had divided the empire and the church.<sup>7</sup> There was an advance

<sup>7</sup> Oldy's Librarian, a copy of which is in the British Museum, contains some curious extracts from a dialogue between a knight and an ecclesiastic on the subject of clerical power and possessions. It is one of the many pieces of the same description which appeared under the sanction, either direct or indirect, of the emperor; and one commending itself particularly to our notice as the production of W. Occam, the great English Schoolman, and contemporary of Wycliffe. The ecclesiastic complains of the illegal burdens imposed on his order, and the knight inquires as to "the law" which had been broken; and on hearing that the law meant was the decrees of the popes and the enactments of the fathers, it is remarked, that such codes of legislation may serve the purpose of churchmen, but their obligation on the laity is said to be a dream. Hence the soldier professes to scorn the upstart

pride of Boniface VIII. in asserting, as had been recently done, his supremacy over the princes and the states of the world. The ministers of the sanctuary, it is contended, should be provided with every thing really necessary to their support. But that the men, who in scripture are compared to workmen, to hired servants, and even to the ox that treadeth out the corn, should aspire to become the superiors of lords and sovereigns, is treated as a marvellous event. It is accordingly added: "If the authority of the king were to fail you, where would be your repose? Would not the poor and prodigal nobles, if they should consume their own property, turn to yours? The royal bands, therefore, are your bulwark: the king's peace is your peace; the king's safety is your safety." There is some forcible sarcasm in the following passage. "It is because kings and princes, at

in the cause of civil liberty, and a revival of learning, observable in the fourteenth century, which were highly favourable to the formation of the character of Wycliffe; but two centuries later, the same causes did much more toward inspiring the genius of Luther. The court of Cæsar had been for ages the retreat of men who had most successfully assailed the secular ambition of the pontiffs; and while the living admirers of the Greek and Roman classics, who had every where multiplied, were, with few exceptions, impatient to effect a reformation of the established system, the councils of Basle, Constance, and Pisa, had exposed its departing strength. At the same time Huss, and Jerome, and their followers, had supplied examples of resistance, which many a good man must have been disposed to emulate. Amid these foreboding appearances, also, the maxims of the papal court continue to be characterized by their ancient perfidy and avarice; and

“their own expence and danger, defend you, and expose themselves gratuitously to death for your sake, that your repose under your shades, eat splendidly, drink joyously, lie down in ornamented beds, sleep quietly, and wanton with soft instruments of music. You therefore are the only lords. Kings and princes are your servants!” When the wealth of the church is said to be the property of God, it is replied, “We mean not to revoke what was given to the Supreme, but to apply it to those uses for which the gift was made.” Nor does it avail to deprecate this interference of lay authority, with respect to clerical wealth, for it follows that unless the revenue possessed to relieve the sick, the poor,

and the oppressed, be so applied in every nation, the laity, who should be faithful executors to a humane ancestry, “must have to do therewith.” The shade of Cæsar’s throne was Occam’s protection while uttering such sentiments. And such sentiments had been for some years familiar to the German people when Luther appeared, who was well acquainted with the works of Occam, and never ceased to revere him. It is also well known that the works of Huss deeply impressed the mind of the Saxon reformer. See his preface to the works of the Bohemian, p. 27. He states that his “astonishment on reading them was incredible,” Lenfant. *Oldy’s Librarian*, quoted in *Turner’s Hist.* v. 107, 108.

CHAP. the German ecclesiastics, whose secular character  
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— had even surpassed that of their brethren in England, appear to have judged it better that the loss of their entire authority should be hazarded, than that any part of it should be surrendered at the call of the people. But, if in these circumstances the professor of Wittenburg possessed advantages superior to those of his illustrious predecessor, it is well known that they were by no means neglected. With both, the philosophy of the schools had absorbed some of the most important years of life, and if the elder may be considered as the superior of the younger in that branch of scholarship, this probably arose from the fact, that less had been said to impair the reputation of that vain science in the age of the one than in that of the other. In every thing coming within the province of taste, Luther is not less defective than Wycliffe, though his opportunities for improvement, in this respect, were very far greater.

They were agreed in vesting the sacred scriptures with supreme authority, and in regarding the works of Augustine as next to them in the scale of importance. But it appears, that the youthful mind of the German had been more completely subdued by superstition, than that of our countryman; and his escape from its thralldom, to the liberty conferred by the gospel, was by means of a more painful process. Hence, the doctrine of justification by faith is adverted to with a constancy and fervour in the writings of Luther, which it will be confessed are not so observable in those of our reformer. In the

theology of both, however, this article, though somewhat differently taught, formed the lever which they endeavoured to fix on the realities of a future world, and from the aid of which they anticipated their projected movement of the present. On the doctrine of the eucharist, Wycliffe was far more enlightened than his great parallel, and his views of ecclesiastical polity were more severely primitive; but both were confident, almost to a fault, not only in the goodness of their cause, but in the strength of the reasonings with which they attempted to support it; discovering through life a remarkable propensity to commit their thoughts and feelings to writing; and in their manner of sending forth their compositions, evincing the same indifference to literary fame. From these causes, it sometimes happened that their premises did not fully warrant their conclusions; and it is no unusual thing to find a paragraph beginning with conceptions of surprising vigour, and ending with sentences which, as they evidently grew under the hand of the writer, and often passed without revision, are scarcely less characterized by redundancy and obscurity. This heedlessness of literary reputation arose plainly from that sense of duty to which both had learned to bow with the most religious submission. In fact, if the actions of men, extending through a series of years, may ever be regarded as presenting a certain development of character, the praise of disinterestedness must be allotted in a high degree to Luther, and in at least an equal measure to Wycliffe. In each, there was much that favoured a life of



CHAP. IX. studious retirement, more than that course of  
 ————— boisterous activity into which they were drawn.

To such activities the physical energies of the Saxon reformer were more equal than were those of his great forerunner. But it is worthy of observation, that the call which the sale of indulgencies supplied to the one, arose from the vices of the same mendicant fraternities in the case of the other, and that with both the conviction of duty was happily more powerful than the passion for study and seclusion.

Luther, indeed, began his career somewhat earlier than the English reformer; but it is difficult to avoid the suspicion, that during the latter years of his life, his mind was in some important respects retrograde rather than progressive; while it is evident that the intelligence and the zeal of Wycliffe brighten and become more intense as his last days are approaching.<sup>8</sup> It is, however, in his contempt for the terrors of power, that the German has been considered as almost without a rival; and if we credit the assertions of some writers, it is on this point that our countryman will least admit of comparison with him. It should be remembered, however, that the persons who have been most forward in accusing the rector of Lutterworth of having sometimes descended to a timid and disingenuous policy, have not feared to impute the same temporizing caution to the professor of Wittenberg.<sup>9</sup> If the proof of courage is to be regulated at all by the degree of peril which is encountered, it may be doubted

<sup>8</sup> The reader will perceive that our knowledge of this material fact depends entirely upon the ascertained

dates of the reformer's MSS.—Note to the second edition.

<sup>9</sup> Lingard's Hist. vi. 121—146.

whether Luther ever stood in the jeopardy which CHAP.  
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was for some years attendant on the footsteps of Wycliffe. It was the felicity of the former to be speedily surrounded by a host of partisans, numbering princes, and a large portion of Christendom, among his followers. But during the two years immediately preceding his death, the Father of the English reformation is seen deserted by the most powerful of his accredited disciples, oppressed by the strength of the hierarchy, and fully anticipating martyrdom. It is at such a foreboding crisis, however, that we find his industry in the cause of reform, and his courage in attempting to promote it, augmented rather than diminished, and such as Luther did not surpass, even in the most favourable periods of his history. Still it is the integrity and the firmness of our reformer which his adversaries have been chiefly employed in impeaching, and the degree of success attending their efforts has arisen from their assuming that he had published obnoxious opinions previous to 1378, which do not appear in the paper then submitted to his judges; and that his subsequent confessions on the eucharist were not a fair expression of his real doctrine on that subject. But though both these things have been so long and so often assumed, it has, I trust, fully appeared, that they are alike and altogether unwarranted. We know not, indeed, what the issue would have been, had the appalling test been really applied; but it is certain that the language employed by Wycliffe, in the series of his works appearing subsequent to the first prosecution which he was called to sustain, is

CHAP. IX. precisely that of a man who has resolved to set all danger at defiance, and to prepare himself by every available motive against the worst that may happen. Sir Thomas More expressed himself delighted, and grateful to heaven, because enabled in an interview with his accusers to act with an intrepidity which had made a retreat inseparable from disgrace.<sup>10</sup> Wycliffe may have felt the importance of such subordinate aids; and it must be admitted that the man who describes himself as constantly exposed to the trial of martyrdom, would hardly have insisted on that severe duty with frequency and emphasis, as binding on every man who would not perish on account of preferring the ease of the present to the bliss of the future, had he not studiously prepared his spirit to meet even that conflict.

Upon the whole, therefore, we may perhaps venture to conclude, that while there certainly were some points of dissimilarity between the two great leaders of the English and the German reformations; the difference between them is more apparent than real, and such as will not be found in the elements of their character, so much as in the circumstances of their history. Nor is it altogether mysterious, that a more qualified estimate should have so far prevailed respecting the character of Wycliffe, than has generally obtained in reference to that of Luther. The bold antagonist of Tetzil laboured, as we have seen, under better auspices, and with more success; and whatever protestant learning or genius could

<sup>10</sup> "In good faith I rejoiced, son, that  
"I had given the devil a foul fall, and  
"that with those lords I have gone so

"far, as without great shame I could  
"never go back again."—Cayley's  
Life of Sir Thomas More, i. 164, 165.

do, has been generously done, toward vindicating his conduct and opinions from the aspersions of his enemies. But in the annals of this country, there are hundreds of men, whose names should not be repeated with that of Wycliffe, to the illustration of whose history a much larger share of industry and talent has been applied.

Such, however, was the character of John de Wycliffe. Thirty winters had passed over his grave, when in the council of Constance, more than three hundred articles, said to be extracted from his manuscripts, were condemned, and with them the whole of his writings. Nor was this anathema considered as an adequate expression of abhorrence. To the council it appeared, and as the result of the strictest inquiry, that John Wycliffe died an obstinate heretic. And it was accordingly farther decreed, that his memory should be pronounced infamous; and that his bones, if to be distinguished from those of the faithful, should be removed from the consecrated ground in which they were deposited, and cast upon a dunghill. Tradition and history report, that in pursuance of this sentence, his remains were taken from their place, reduced to ashes, and thrown into the river which still passes the town of Lutterworth. Thence, in the language of Fuller, they were conducted to the Severn, the narrow seas, and the ocean; and thus became the emblem of his doctrine, which was to flow from the province to the nation, and from the nation, to the many kingdoms of the world.<sup>11</sup>

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Burning of  
the bones of  
Wycliffe.

<sup>11</sup> Church History, 171, 172. Fox. tence of the council of Constance. Len-  
Acts. The disinterment was not until fant, Hist. ubi supra.  
thirteen years subsequent to the sen-

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State of the  
reformed  
doctrine in  
England,  
from the de-  
cease of Wy-  
cliffe to the  
age of Lu-  
ther.

During the period which intervened between the decease of the reformer, and the offering of this pitiful insult to his remains, some important changes had taken place in the affairs of the Anglican church, and in the government of the country. The wars between the houses of York and Lancaster, and the reformation under Henry the eighth, belong to the most prominent facts of English history; and it is not from our most popular historians that the leading causes of either may be readily ascertained. Under Richard the second, and still more during the reign of his illustrious predecessor, the clergy had learned to dread the consequences of too near an alliance between the secular nobility and the crown. On the accession of Henry the fourth, churchmen succeeded to much of that influence which had been previously possessed by the lay aristocracy; and elated with the change, they were not satisfied with resisting every attempt to lessen that opulence which had so long exposed their order to suspicion and complaint; but to this powerful cause of discontent, they still added the exhibition of a character which tended to deterioration rather than improvement. In the meanwhile, the most childish and dangerous fictions in the superstitions of the age were pertinaciously encouraged; and with these impolitic proceedings, a system of persecution was annexed, more relentless than had been previously known in this kingdom. The latter expedient, it was vainly hoped, would be sufficient to extinguish the disaffection which the former circumstances continued to excite. A

feeling of distrust and wariness was thus induced CHAP.  
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among the people, and it would not have been surprising if much of the character of the Spaniard had been grafted on the better properties of the Englishman. But by these measures, the opinions of such as were impatient of tyranny were rather confirmed than shaken, preparing them to become the abettors, and very innocently too, of almost any movement which promised them a change of masters. To the prevalence of the disaffection which was thus produced and kept alive, we must not fail to advert, if we would explain the readiness with which the houses of York and Lancaster brought the nation to join in their disastrous conflicts; or if we would account for the security of Henry the eighth, while separating the church of England, as with a single stroke, from the chair of St. Peter. Through the whole of this disorderly interval, the king and the clergy, while agreed in the exercise of almost every domestic oppression, continued, with slight intermissions, to set the dangerous example of resisting certain encroachments of the pontiffs; and, at the same time, not only the humbler classes of the laity, but many, both among the mendicant orders and among the secular clergy themselves, are found variously favouring the doctrines of Wycliffe. By some, the opinions of that reformer were embraced, so far only as they related to what was most objectionable in the existing superstitions, or to the secular encroachments of the hierarchy. By others, they were adopted principally on account of their religious character, or their immediate

CHAP. connexion with piety ; and if these parties were  
 IX. — not equally prepared to become martyrs in the cause of their creed, they were alike disposed to favour any change which tended to abridge the power of a depraved and merciless priesthood, daily goading them to madness. On the continent also, the writings of Wycliffe were the means of reviving, and of greatly extending the spirit of the reformation ; and the noble conduct of Huss, and Jerome, and their followers, while acknowledging our illustrious countrymen as their principal instructor, was not to be lost on the mind of his injured disciples in this kingdom. About the period of Wycliffe's decease, a spirited intercourse commenced between the advocates of the protestant doctrine in England, and in other states ; and it was kept up in the face of every attempt to suppress it, until this nation, and a large portion of Europe, became united in rejecting the whole of that authority which had been so long conceded to the pontiffs as their proper inheritance.

Such is the outline, which it was my intention to have filled up in the form of an extended supplementary chapter to the life of Wycliffe, but the space occupied by other matters forbids the attempt. A brief selection of such facts as may serve to illustrate the spirit with which the tenets of the reformer were maintained, and the character of the opposition with which his disciples were called to struggle, until the appearance of Luther, must suffice.

Progress of  
 persecution.

The persecutions which shortened the days of Wycliffe, were to be succeeded by others of



a more sanguinary character. In 1393, the suc- CHAP.  
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cess of the weapons hitherto employed against heresy had proved to be so partial, that an instrument was obtained from Richard, empowering the archbishop of Canterbury, as legate of the apostolic see, and also his suffragans, to “correct all who should obstinately preach or maintain, whether publicly or privately, any conclusion as from the sacred scriptures, while contrary to the determinations of the church.” Such offenders were to be committed to the prison of the bishop, or of the sheriff, as the prelates should determine; and so to be treated, “that the sharpness of their sufferings” might bring them to repentance. The “secret places,” in which such preachers were accustomed to meet their “factors and accomplices,” had enabled them to elude the vigilance of their adversaries. But that no such refuge might serve them in future, the civil authorities are instructed to give all publicity to the royal proclamation; and a penalty is denounced on all, of whatever rank, who may henceforth presume to shelter the delinquent.<sup>12</sup>

But it was less difficult to deliver such instructions, than to secure their execution. The leading men among the disciples of Wycliffe, were probably aware that the obnoxious instrument was less that of the sovereign than of an interested party, whom it was considered important to please. We know that only two years later, certain members of the house of commons ventured to agitate questions relating to a reformation

Petition of  
the Lollards.

<sup>12</sup> Fox, i. 658.

CHAP. of the church, which were of a much bolder  
IX. character than had been at any time contemplated in that assembly. Their petition consisted of twelve conclusions, and was to the following purport. The church of England, from the age in which she began to dote on temporalities, after the example of Rome, her stepmother, has declined in faith, hope, and charity, and has surrendered their place to pride, and all deadly sin, as experience manifests. The established forms of priestly ordination, are human inventions; and as the gifts of the Holy Spirit cannot exist in connexion with deadly sin, it is impious to pretend that they always accompany the performance of that rite. The celibacy of the clergy, and of the religious, is the parent of the worst of crimes; and imposes a restraint, which men so addicted to intemperance must frequently violate. Reform, in this particular, should commence with the monasteries; in whose dissolution the convents of females should participate, and for the same reasons. The doctrine of transubstantiation leads to idolatry; but would be wisely discarded, if the language of the Evangelical Doctor, in his Trialogus, were duly considered. The practice of exorcising, and the customs relating to consecrations, savour more of necromancy than of divinity; and in every kingdom the worldly offices of churchmen are the occasion of disorder, requiring them to attempt that service of God and mammon which the scriptures declare to be impossible. If prayer for the dead be offered, let it be for the departed in general, and not for individuals; it might then proceed from charity,

and be acceptable to God ; it is now the work of the hireling, and therefore unavailing. Absolution, and auricular confession, as now practised, are the great stimulants to priestly domination, and often subservient to the schemes of impurity. To be persuaded, indeed, that in the church of England, with the bishop of Rome at her head, there is no little falsehood concealed, it is enough to remember, that no day occurs in which the bliss of heaven might not be purchased for the sum of a dozen pence. Nearly allied also to idolatry, are the pilgrimages performed in favour of images and relics, and the honours commonly yielded to them. The chief tendency of such customs is, assuredly, to continue the people in delusion and ignorance, and to swell the affluence of the indolent among the clergy. On war, the maxims both of priests and laymen are at variance with those contained in the gospel ; the pacific character of which is such, that if they allow the slaughter of men at all, they certainly oppose the act of destroying them, with a view to any merely temporal gain ; as in wresting distant provinces from the people possessing them, on the plea of punishing their erroneous faith, or under any such pretence.<sup>13</sup>

Such is the substance of the petition to which the disciples of Wycliffe were concerned to direct the attention of the English parliament in 1395. The boldness with which its doctrines were avowed, and the rank of many who were known

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<sup>13</sup> Wilkins, Con. iii 221. Mr. Lewis has printed a copy of this petition, taken from the Selden MSS. It differs in the last article from that inserted in

the Acts and Monuments, which was taken from the bishops' register, i. 662—664.

CHAP. IX. to have embraced them, created no small alarm among the clergy. The king was at this time in Ireland. Messengers were instantly despatched to lay before him the danger to which the church was exposed, and to urge his immediate return to counteract the machinations of her enemies. Richard obeyed their call, and Lewis Clifford, John Latimer, Richard Sturry, and John Montague, are among the knights who, as having dared to favour the prayer of the obnoxious petition, were severely reprimanded by the sovereign.<sup>14</sup>

Tidings of their presumption soon reached the vatican, and called forth an inflammatory letter from Boniface the ninth, addressed to the English monarch. The pontiff commences by expressing his deep sorrow, in common with that of Christendom, that heresy should so far have infected the English people; and that through the negligence of the established authorities it should still be found increasing, numbering among its abettors men of learning, a multitude of the common people, and many who not only ventured to preach doctrines subversive both of the civil and ecclesiastical state, and to commit them to writing, but to affirm them obstinately in the presence of the parliament. The archbishops and bishops of England are accordingly admonished, that their guilty sloth must be no longer indulged, but that their utmost efforts must be made, to "root out and destroy" all such as refuse to abandon the snare of Satan. The king is also exhorted to employ his authority, and to secure

<sup>14</sup> Wals. Hist. 351.

to the clergy the assistance of all magistrates, that every offender persisting in his wickedness might be banished, or securely imprisoned, until sentenced, in due form, to undergo his merited punishment.

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This appeal of Boniface to his "sweet son," would not, perhaps, have been made in vain, had not the disorders of the kingdom been such as to prevent the easy performance of the services required. With respect to the English clergy, the reader must have noticed the frequency with which the pontiffs accused them of indifference to the progress of heresy; and he must also be aware that the parties accused were far from deserving the reproach thus cast upon them. Thus the primate Courtney, while Boniface is complaining of his sloth in the hallowed work of persecution, was in fact prosecuting it to the utmost of his power.<sup>15</sup>

But thus the affairs of the church and of the Lollards continued, until the English sceptre was wrested from the grasp of Richard of Bordeaux, by Henry of Lancaster. On the accession of the latter, as Henry the fourth, the hopes of the reformers were considerably raised. But they were soon to learn, that the son of John of Gaunt had failed to inherit the sentiments of his father in relation to the church, or that he had imbibed them so feebly, as to admit of their being easily sacrificed to political purposes. Thomas Arundel, who succeeded Courtney in the primacy, had been previously translated from Ely to York, and had filled the office of chancellor. In a parliament

Accession of  
the house of  
Lancaster.

<sup>15</sup> FOX. Acts, &c. i. 657—659.

CHAP. convened about two years before the deposing  
 IX. — of Richard, the new primate had been impeached of treason, and was sentenced to forfeit his temporalities, and to leave the kingdom for ever. But he returned in the train of Henry, and placing the crown on the brow of the new monarch, became a party to the bad faith through which his patron had passed to the possession of his dignity. The king was soon made sensible that the Lollards constituted the only peace-offering that could secure him the cordial support of the clergy; and his policy appears to have at once suggested, that it became not the possessor of an ascendancy so doubtfully acquired, to neglect the known wishes of a body having at command so large a portion of the wealth and authority of the state. Hence, “immediately on his accession, Henry proclaimed himself the protector of the church against the assaults of the Lollards. In the first convocation held during his reign, his intentions were made known to the clergy by a royal messenger; at the opening of the second, the king’s commissioners, the earl of Northumberland, and Erpringham, the lord chamberlain, exhorted the prelates and proctors to take measures for the suppression of the errors disseminated by the itinerant preachers, and promised them the royal favour and assistance in the pursuit of so necessary an object.”<sup>16</sup> A similar announcement was at the same time made to the parliament; and encouraged by these favourable appearances, the clergy presented a petition to that assembly, and to the king, which led to the

<sup>16</sup> Lingard’s Hist. iv. 443, 444.

enactment of the infamous statute for the burning of heretics. CHAP.  
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This instrument commences with preferring the usual complaints respecting persons preaching without the licence of the proper authorities, possessing heretical books, convening unlawful assemblies, and diffusing, in many ways, the most pestilent opinions. Against these disorders it is provided, that no man shall hereafter attempt the work of religious instruction except duly authorized; that within forty days all books containing doctrines opposed to the determinations of the church shall be delivered to the ecclesiastical officers; and that all persons convicted of offending in these particulars, or of joining prohibited meetings, or of any way favouring them, shall be committed to the bishop's prison, to be there dealt with at his pleasure, during a space not exceeding three months. If at the expiration of that period they shall perform their purgation, a fine shall be levied on the property of each culprit according to the nature of his offence, the same to be paid to the king's majesty. But with respect to such as should retain their errors, or abjuring them, should relapse, it was enacted, that the local officers, both civil and clerical, shall confer together, "and the sentence being duly pronounced, the magistrate shall take into hand the same persons so offending, and any of them, and cause them openly to be burned in the sight of all the people, to the intent that this kind of punishment may be a terror unto others, that the like wicked doctrine, and heretical opinions, or the authors and favourers thereof,

Statute heretico comburendo.



CHAP. IX. "be no more maintained within this realm." It  
 ——— is worthy of notice, also, that the framers of this merciless law have founded it, not on the common law of Europe, but on the canons of the church, a circumstance which clearly denotes its clerical origin.<sup>17</sup>

Arundel's  
 constitu-  
 tions.

If any doubt could have existed as to the real parents of this hateful enactment, a series of regulations proposed at the same time by the archbishop of Canterbury, and adopted by a convocation of the clergy, must have served to place the matter beyond suspicion. These constitutions are attributed to Arundel. In introducing them, the primate speaks of the pontiff, as bearing the key of eternal life and death; as filling the place, not of mere humanity, but of the true God; and the guilt of the men who oppose their own judgments to his decisions, is accordingly said to be that of rebellion and sacrilege. Among other complicated enormities, the heretics of the age are charged with the practice of concealing the evil of their purposes, under the appearances of a regard for truth and sanctity; but notwithstanding these pretensions, they are viewed as evidently constituting the tail of the black horse, in the Revelations of St. John. Wycliffe had affirmed the religious orders to be the tail of the apocalyptic beast. Arundel, it would seem, had determined to be even with the arch-heretic, in this particular. In hope, therefore, of cleansing, not merely the stream, but its source also, it is decreed, that no man shall henceforth venture to preach without the licence of his ordinary; that

<sup>17</sup> Rot. Parl. iii. 466. Wilkins, Con. iii. 252.

even such as are thus licensed, shall confine themselves to a statement of those things which are expressly contained in the constitution framed in aid of the ignorance of priests, and beginning *ignorantia sacerdotum*; and that any man persisting in a contempt of these canons, shall forfeit all his possessions, and suffer the other penalties awarded by the statute against heresy. A sentence of interdict is next passed on every church admitting an heretical teacher; and all schoolmasters are required to abstain from mixing any religious opinions with their province of instruction, and especially to prevent their scholars from examining the scriptures in English, and from indulging in discussions respecting the sacraments of the church. All books written by John Wycliffe, and others of his time; and all hereafter to be written; are to be banished from schools, halls, hospitals, and all places whatsoever—excepting such as may be approved by a council of twelve persons, to be chosen by one or both of the universities. It is also enacted, that no man shall hereafter translate any text of scripture into English, upon his own authority; and all who shall be convicted of attempting such translations, or of reading them, shall be punished as favouring error, and heresy. The scriptures being thus disposed of, it is farther resolved, that men shall not presume to dispute on any of the articles determined by holy church, and contained in her decretals, or in her constitutions, whether those of provincial or of general councils. To question the authority of the said “decretals and constitutions,” especially as enjoining pilgrimage to

CHAP. the shrines of saints, and the whole of the accus-  
 IX. ——— tomed adorations and ceremonies with respect to the cross and images, is certain heresy, and to be punished to the utmost. In the eleventh constitution the prevalence of Wycliffe's doctrine in the university of Oxford, under the "new and damnable name of Lollardie," is deplored; and to cleanse the fountain, once so pure, but from which of late so much poison had proceeded, the strictest inquisition is required to be immediately and constantly made, that all persons suspected of heretical opinions may be prosecuted, according to the canons and the laws before named. Finally, it is determined, that as the crime of heresy is more enormous than treason, since it is a revolt from the authority of the King of kings, all persons suspected of that offence, and refusing to appear before the proper authorities when duly cited, shall, though absent, be adjudged guilty.<sup>18</sup>

These measures, both of the government and of the church, imply the prevalence of Wycliffe's opinions among his countrymen at this period. Our devout martyrologist concludes his notice of these events by observing, "Who would have  
 "thought by these laws and constitutions so sub-  
 "stantially founded, so circumspectly provided,  
 "so diligently executed, but that the name and  
 "memory of this persecuted sect should have  
 "been utterly rooted up, and never could have  
 "stood? And yet, such be the works of the  
 "Lord, passing all man's admiration, that not-  
 "withstanding all this, so far was it off, that the

<sup>18</sup> The reader may see a copy of these constitutions in Fox, i. 683—686.

“ number and courage of these good men were CHAP.  
 “ indeed vanquished, that they rather multiplied IX.  
 “ daily, and increased, especially at London,  
 “ and Lincolnshire, Norfolk, and Herefordshire,  
 “ in Shrewsbury, in Calais, and divers other  
 “ quarters more.”<sup>19</sup>

When the English sceptre passed into the hands of Henry the fifth, and the primacy of the Anglican church was transferred by the death of Arundel, to Henry Chichely, the same measures were resorted to, and the same fate attended them.<sup>20</sup> Many were brought to the stake, and generally on account of rejecting the tenet of transubstantiation; others were compelled to recant, but a still greater number eluded the search of their persecutors. The mendicants also became vociferous in advocating Wycliffe's doctrine with respect to clerical revenue, though without the mention of his name; and a spirit of violence was frequently manifested against the clergy, which discovered that the effect of the cruelties in which they had indulged, had been rather to confirm the popular aversion to their order, than to extinguish the principles which favoured ecclesiastical reform.<sup>21</sup> Thus from the register of Lincoln, and so late as the year 1521, it appears that in that diocese alone, more than five hundred

<sup>19</sup> Fox. Acts, &c. i. 686, 687.

<sup>20</sup> The latter primate claimed the honour of seeing the bones of Wycliffe consumed. Wilkins, iii. 350.

<sup>21</sup> Fox, i. 661. Turner's Hist. iii. 123—136. The following names occur in Wilkins, as those of persons prosecuted by the clergy on the charge of heresy, during the interval from 1419

to 1428. R. Owtrede, W. Browne, R. Wyche, W. James, W. Taylour, W. Hatton, Fleming, W. Russell, R. Hoke, J. Drayton, S. Richmond, J. Jourdelay, C. Dertford, R. Ruten, W. Harvey, J. Calle, R. Meyngyn, R. Monk, G. Garentur. Concilia, iii. 394—499.

CHAP. IX. persons had been obliged to appear before the bishop, under the charge of offences which bespoke them the disciples of Wycliffe.<sup>22</sup> These, we must conclude, formed only a small portion of those to whom the same delinquencies might with equal justice have been imputed. It was a perception of this state of things which led Sir Thomas More to predict the ascendancy of the protestant cause in this country, some time before it was anticipated by other men.<sup>23</sup> The nation must have been fully ripe for such a change, when it could be accomplished with so much safety, by a prince possessing so little to endear him to his subjects as Henry the eighth. On many points the revolution effected by his authority was merely a change of tyrannies. But so far had the hatred of the Roman yoke pervaded the people, that they were many of them ready to submit to almost any other in its place. Much light, indeed, was derived at that crisis from Germany, but its efficiency arose from the fact, that it came like the seed which falls on the earth prepared to receive it. All the states of Europe were exposed, more or less, to the action of the same causes, and most of them, from their connexion with the continent, in a much greater degree than England; and from the history of such as did, or did not embrace the reformed doctrine, it is plain that this difference is to be traced to the existence, or the non-existence, of pre-disposing causes—and these, as existing in our own country, must be traced to the labours of Wycliffe. The council of Constance, and the clergy of Christen-

<sup>22</sup> Fox, ii. p. 33.

<sup>23</sup> Cayley's *Life of Thomas More*, c. ii. p. 77.

dom, regarded him as having formed the character of John Huss, and Jerome of Prague. Both were bold in avowing their reverence for the character of our reformer, and their approbation of his general doctrine, and both proved themselves disciples worthy of such a master.<sup>24</sup> By their instrumentality, together with that of Zisca, many of the learned and the opulent, and a multitude from that class of society where religion connects itself most powerfully with the conscience, were taught to spurn many a usurpation of the pontiffs. Maxims which the church had declared to be true, they renounced as false and injurious; and practices which the same authority had affirmed to be most devout and christian, were rejected as heathenism rendered still more criminal.

But before concluding these observations, it will be proper to devote a few pages to the story of Lord Cobham. In this country he was, for some years, the leading patron of Wycliffe's disciples, and was moreover a sincere adherent to the religious creed of our reformer. His sufferings will disclose the temper with which the contest was carried on between the Lollards and the priesthood, to the period when the papal power was excluded from these realms. No event could have shewn more decisively the superior talents and the unblemished reputation of Lord Cobham, than his continuance in the favour of Henry the fourth, notwithstanding his known attachment to

<sup>24</sup> Lenfant. Council of Constance. The university of Prague, in which Huss inculcated the doctrine of Wycliffe, must have been no ordinary establishment, as it is stated by a con-

temporary that 36,000 Germans forsook it in consequence of the issue of certain disputes between the Nominalists and Realists. Mosheim, iii. 409.

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principles which required the most complete reformation of the church, or rather of the clergy.<sup>25</sup>

But in 1413, Henry of Lancaster was no more; and as the young prince of Wales had hitherto passed his time in the lowest company, and in the most licentious pursuits, the change was thought to be pregnant with danger to the ecclesiastical state. That prince, however, was no sooner called to the throne, than his former associates and his former habits were alike abandoned. Well it would have been, had he possessed, at this moment, some more humane counsellors, than were those to whom the royal conscience was surrendered. From having betrayed an unusual contempt for the institutions and the morals of society, he became the zealous advocate of the established religion, with all its follies and corruptions.

At this period Lord Cobham was exposed to the special resentment of the clergy, not only as having more than once abetted the most obnoxious tenets of Lollardism in the English parliament, but as having long maintained numerous preachers of that sect.<sup>26</sup> These are described as having made the provinces subject to the jurisdiction of his grace of Canterbury, and those owning the authority of their lordships of Hereford, Rochester, and London, the principal scene of their itinerant labours. In addition to which, the wealth of this distinguished offender had been freely expended,

<sup>25</sup> In 1407, Henry embarked a considerable force to aid the Duke of Burgundy against the Duke of Orleans, and the name of Lord Cobham occurs as second in command.

<sup>26</sup> The steps of the prosecution, which issued in Lord Cobham's condemnation, may be learnt from the documents in Fox, in Rymer, and from the first volume of the State Trials.



to multiply copies of the writings of Wycliffe, and by this means the seeds of disaffection had not only increased in England, but were scattered through Bohemia, and other states of the continent. All this too had been done, in contempt of those solemn decrees, which had doomed the preachers so encouraged, and the writings thus diffused, to become the fuel of the same fire. Nor had these maxims of intolerance obtained the sanction conferred upon them merely as an instrument of terror. The works of our reformer were diligently sought after, and committed to the flames. Sawtre, a clergyman whose sincere zeal had, perhaps, outstripped his discernment; and Badby, a mechanic, whose fidelity and heroism would have done honour to the man of any rank, had both perished at the stake, as the penalty of denying the impious dogma of transubstantiation.

It was accordingly determined, in a convocation of the clergy, with the primate Arundel at its head, that a prosecution of Lord Cobham, as the leader of the parties who were so obstinately allied in their opposition to the church, should be immediately commenced. But it was prudently suggested, that the pleasure of the sovereign should be ascertained before proceeding to act upon this decision, since the offender, in addition to his rank, was certainly respected by the court, and near the person of the king. A deputation was in consequence appointed to wait upon the monarch; and having exposed in the royal presence the peculiar guilt of the accused, it was urged as strictly necessary, if the piety, or the

CHAP. IX. recognized institutions of the land were to be preserved, that some signal penalty should be speedily inflicted. Henry expressed his disapprobation of the opinions, and of the conduct, imputed to Lord Cobham; but requested the suspension of all proceedings until he should have reasoned with him, adding, that should this milder effort be without effect, the punishment of the culprit must be left to the wisdom of the church. The knight listened to his sovereign with reverence, and, in the language of Archbishop Wake, returned the following “respectful answer.”—“I am, as I have always been, most willing to obey your majesty as the minister of God, appointed to bear the sword of justice, for the punishment of evil doers, and the protection of those who do well. To you, therefore, next to my eternal living Judge, I owe my whole obedience, and entirely submit, as I have ever done, to your pleasure, my life and all my fortune in this world, and in all affairs of it whatever, am ready to perform exactly your royal commands. But as to the pope and the spiritual dominion which he claims, I owe him no services, that I know of, nor will I pay him any; for as sure as God’s word is true, to me it is fully evident that he is the great Antichrist, the son of perdition, the open adversary of God, and the abomination standing in the holy place.”<sup>27</sup> Henry was sorely displeased that neither his arguments nor his condescension could bring his faithful soldier to avow a return to orthodoxy; and abandoned by the king, Lord

<sup>27</sup> State of the Church, ubi supra.

Cobham was left to contend alone with the united strength of his clerical adversaries.

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His home at this period was Cowley Castle, once the residence of his father-in-law, and situate about three miles from Rochester. The usual steps were taken by the clergy to induce his appearance before them, but in vain; and it was resolved to solicit the assistance of the secular arm to secure his apprehension, as “the seditious  
“apostate, schismatic, and heretic, the troubler  
“of the public peace, the enemy of the realm,  
“the great adversary of all holy church.” The persecuted knight now made a second appeal to the justice of his sovereign; but from the royal presence the ecclesiastical officers were allowed to conduct him to the Tower. After some days, he was brought before the archbishop of Canterbury, and the bishops of London and Winchester, in the chapter-house of St. Paul’s. Arundel reminded the prisoner of the sentence which, as primate, he had been recently called to pass on him; at the same time informing him that the absolution which had been hitherto despised, might still be obtained on proper submission. But it was requested by the accused, that as he had no wish to protract inquiry, and as his opinions were certainly unalterable, he might be allowed to read from a document in his hand, the sentiments which he entertained in relation to the articles on which he presumed himself to be suspected of error. This paper referred chiefly to the doctrine of the eucharist, to the nature of penance, the worship of images, and the custom of pilgrimage, and was, with some additional

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explanations, a copy of that which he had recently presented to the king. On all the points named, both the sentiment and language of this confession were in substance those of Wycliffe. By the prelates it was considered as in some respects orthodox, in others as requiring farther explanation; and there were moreover several points unnoticed in that statement, on which his opinions must be known. But it was avowed by the prisoner as his determination to communicate no more than the document before them contained. "You see me in your power, and do with me as "you please," was his simple and decisive language. Arundel was perplexed by this conduct, but presently admonished him that the things to be believed by Christians were a matter which had been placed beyond controversy by the authority of the church; and that on the following Monday more explicit answers would be expected from him. The archbishop also informed him, that to aid his mind in the interval care should be taken to make him acquainted with the judgment of the church on the questions at issue. On the morrow a paper was received by Lord Cobham, which affirmed, in the grossest terms, and in the name of the church, the necessity of confession to a priest, the merit of pilgrimages, the propriety of the worship rendered to images and holy relics, also the supremacy of the pope, and the mysteries of transubstantiation.

On the day appointed he appeared before a formidable array of judges in the monastery of the Dominicans, near Ludgate. Beside the prelates, the doctors, and the heads of religious

houses, included in this assembly, was “a great  
 “sort more, of priests, monks, canons, friars, —  
 “parish clerks, bell-ringers, and pardoners.”  
 These are described as treating the “horrible  
 “heretic with innumerable mocks and scorns.”<sup>28</sup>  
 With these, also, were others, who were addressed  
 by the prisoner as the people, being the laity  
 who were witnesses of the proceedings. The  
 archbishop commenced by adverting to the ab-  
 solution which had been so mildly proffered in  
 several instances, only to be contemned, but  
 which he was nevertheless prepared even yet to  
 bestow, should it be sought in “due form and  
 “manner, as holy church hath ordained.” To  
 this it was replied, that the judgment of men is  
 frequently opposed to that of their Maker; and  
 as the accused had never wronged the archbishop  
 of Canterbury, it was not from him that he was  
 concerned to obtain forgiveness. While uttering  
 these sentiments, he became deeply affected, and  
 bending his knee to the earth, he raised his hands  
 towards heaven, exclaiming solemnly, “I con-  
 “fess myself here unto thee, my eternal living  
 “God, that in my frail youth I offended thee,  
 “O Lord! most grievously, in pride, wrath, and  
 “gluttony, in covetousness, and in lechery.  
 “Many men have I injured in mine anger, and  
 “done many other horrible sins; good Lord, of  
 “thee I ask mercy.” Rising from the posture  
 suited to this act of devotion, he wept as he  
 glanced on the people who were spectators of his  
 injuries, and with an impassioned utterance he

<sup>28</sup> Fox. Acts, &c.

CHAP. delivered his prophetic warning, "Lo! good  
IX. " people, lo!—for the breaking of God's law and  
" commandments, these men never yet cursed  
" me. But for the sake of their own laws and  
" traditions, most cruelly do they handle both me  
" and other men. Both they, therefore, and  
" their laws, according to the promise of God,  
" shall be utterly destroyed." It may be credited,  
that the firmness of his adversaries was in some  
measure disturbed by this burst of feeling and  
intrepidity. A lengthened discussion now took  
place, and one to which the archbishop, the  
doctors, and the leaders of the religious brought  
all their learning, their acuteness, and their pas-  
sions, each uttering his pressing questions with  
a view to ensnare and overpower their victim.  
On being urged to answer distinctly whether the  
bread remained in the sacrament of the altar,  
after the words of consecration were pronounced,  
his reply was an affirmative; and a smile then  
passed over the countenance of his opponents, as  
they concluded, " the people would now judge  
" him to be taken in a great heresy." Still  
pressed with inquiries on this subject, and on  
the authority of the church, he remarks, " My  
" belief is, as I said before, that all the scriptures  
" of the sacred book are true. All that is grounded  
" upon them I believe thoroughly, for I know it  
" is God's pleasure that I should do so. But in  
" your lordly laws and idle determinations have  
" I no belief. For ye are no part of Christ's  
" holy church, as your open deeds do shew; but  
" ye are very Antichrists, obstinately set against  
" his holy law and will. The laws which ye

“ have made are nothing to his glory, but wholly  
 “ to your own vain-glory and covetousness.” It CHAP.  
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 is not surprising that such assertions should  
 be loudly denounced as “ exceeding heresy.”  
 Thomas Walden, the Carmelite, and a well-  
 known antagonist of Wycliffe, observed, that to  
 affirm of any person, and especially of superiors,  
 that they are no part of holy church, must be  
 presumption, according to the maxim, “ Judge  
 “ not, that ye be not judged.” But it was re-  
 torted, “ Christ said also in the self-same chapter  
 “ of Matthew, that like as the evil tree is known  
 “ by its fruits, so is a false prophet by his works,  
 “ but that text ye left behind ye.” To this and  
 similar quotations of scripture, the same mendicant  
 replied, “ Ye make here no difference of  
 “ judgments; between the evil judgments which  
 “ Christ hath forbidden, and the good judgments  
 “ which he hath commanded. Rash judgment  
 “ and right judgment, all is one with you. Such  
 “ swift judges ever are these learned scholars of  
 “ Wycliffe.” The Carmelite had now touched a  
 chord to which the bosom of the prisoner could  
 not but respond. “ Well, indeed,” he said, “ have  
 “ ye sophistered. Preposterous evermore are  
 “ *your* judgments. For as the prophet Isaiah  
 “ saith, ye judge evil good, and good evil, and  
 “ therefore the same prophet concludeth that  
 “ your ways are not God’s ways. And as for  
 “ that virtuous man Wycliffe, before God and  
 “ man, I here profess, that until I knew him and  
 “ his doctrine, that ye so highly disdain, I never  
 “ abstained from sin; but since I have learnt  
 “ from him to fear my God, I trust it has been



CHAP. "otherwise with me. So much grace could I  
IX. "never find in all your glorious instructions." Here the friar became indignant, and remarked, "It were not well with me that in an age so supplied with teachers and examples, I should find no grace to amend my life until I heard the devil preach." This, in return, is said to be precisely the temper which led the pharisees to impute the doctrine and miracles of Christ to the agency of Beelzebub; and to be a part of the evil entailed on the church from the day in which she received the "venom of Judas." The archbishop inquired what that venom meant, and the answer was, "Your possessions and lordships." These things are said to have made "Rome the very nest of Antichrist, out of which come all the disciples of Antichrist, of whom prelates, priests, and monks, are the body, and these friars the tail. Priests and deacons, for the preaching of God's word and the administering of sacraments, with provision for the poor, are, indeed, grounded on God's law, but these other sects have no manner of support thence, as far as I have read." It now became evident, that nothing but evil could arise from protracting this discussion; and the archbishop hastened to admonish the prisoner that the day waned; that much forbearance had been shewn him in vain; and that his escape from the most serious penalties could only be secured by an implicit submission to the authority of the church. The only effect of these appeals was an avowal of unaltered sentiment, and a repetition of the words, "Do with me as you will." The archbishop then

rose, the clergy and the laity stood uncovered, and sentence was pronounced on “ Sir John CHAP.  
IX. Oldcastle, knight, and lord of Cobham, as a “ most pernicious and detestable heretic;” a sentence which also prohibited any man from rendering him either “ counsel or help,” on pain of incurring the censures denounced against the favourers of heretics. It was farther arranged, that this decree should be published in the mother tongue from the pulpits of every diocese within the province of Canterbury. When the primate had pronounced the anathema of the court, Lord Cobham, with a composed aspect and a firm utterance, remarked, that he knew that sentence could affect the body only, adding, that with regard to the soul, he doubted not but “ He who “ created that, would, of his infinite mercy and “ promise, save it.” His eyes were then turned towards the people who had listened to his doom, but it was to exercise pity, and not to implore it. With an impassioned voice, he bid them beware of the men before him, if they would avoid the fate of the blind who follow the footsteps of the blind; and the few moments which preceded his being re-conducted to the Tower, were spent in entreating the divine forgiveness for his persecutors.

In this proceeding the passions of the clergy appear to have hurried them much beyond their discretion. No avowal of heretical opinions could be more decided or more notorious, than was that of Lord Cobham, and yet a considerable interval passed, and the sentence of the law remained unexecuted. At length, whether by connivance,

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— or by his own ingenuity, the prisoner escaped from the Tower, and embarking under the cover of the night, found an asylum on the shores of the principality.

His trial had taken place some days before the close of September, and on the night of the 7th of January, an event transpired, which has proved a fruitful theme of misrepresentation and calumny. Of the orthodox writers, who were contemporaries, or more nearly contemporary with the occurrence, there is no one who in describing it is not materially at issue with himself and with his brethren.

Walsingham is noticed by Mr. Sharon Turner as "the bitterest enemy of the reformers," and in consequence as stating this transaction "most favourably to the king and his party." I know not that I can do better than submit to the candour of the reader, the substance of Walsingham's *ex-parte* statements, as given by our more dispassionate historian. "Reports," he observes, "were spread, that the Lollards were plotting to destroy the king and his brothers at Eltham. Informed of the design, the king went to his palace at Westminster, to be safer from its publicity. He was then told that they were assembling from all quarters into a field near St. Giles's, to act under their leader, Oldcastle, at a fixed day and hour. The king, at night, ordered his friends to arm, and then *first* mentioned what he resolved to do. He was advised to wait until day-break, that they might discern who were willing to act with him, or against him, and was advised by others to wait,

“ till he got an army together, if a formidable CHAP.  
 “ body was to be met. He listened to neither, IX.  
 “ because he *had heard* that the Lollards intended  
 “ to burn Westminster Abbey, St. Paul’s, St.  
 “ Alban’s, and all the other friaries in London.  
 “ He went, therefore, to St. Giles’s in the middle  
 “ of the night, anticipating the projected move-  
 “ ments of the ensuing day. He found only a  
 “ few persons there, who being asked what they  
 “ wanted, said, the lord Cobham. They were  
 “ seized and imprisoned. They were surprised  
 “ to find that *no one* came from London to join  
 “ them. The king had ordered all the city gates  
 “ to be shut and guarded ; and if he had not taken  
 “ this precaution, *there would have come*, (‘ prout-  
 “ fertur,’) *as it was reported*, fifty thousand servants  
 “ and apprentices against the king.”<sup>29</sup>

Such, reader, is the clumsy tale supplied by Walsingham, on this subject, who is nevertheless

<sup>29</sup> Hist. ii. 452, 453. The credulity of Walsingham did not die with him. These disciples of Wycliffe are still described, as conducted, at one time, by their notions of private judgment, into all that discordant variety of opinion, which is said to be the common punishment of such presumption ; while at another they are so organized, that at some secret bidding 20,000 can be suddenly put in motion, and all without knowing why ! To-day they are such “ a compound of fanaticism and folly ” as to complain of the clergy to the parliament, because they “ authorize war and criminal executions, which are contrary to the law of Christ, a law of mercy and love ; and because they permit men to exercise the trade of goldsmith and sword-cutler, which are unnecessary and pernicious under the dispensation of the gospel,” and

to-morrow they heard the government by stating that “ if the authority of the crown should be employed in opposition to their doctrine, they are able to assemble 100,000 men ready to draw the sword in its defence.” But such is the thread of contradiction, which the care of Providence has commonly interwoven with the stories of oppression. See Dr. Lingard’s Hist. iv. 319, 321, 443. v. 3—6.

Fox has brought his learning and ingenuity to the investigation of the charge of treason as preferred against Sir John Oldcastle, by Harpsfield. Acts and Monuments, i. 740—772. The shape which the controversy between the Lollards and the orthodox assumed at a later period, the reader may learn from Mr. Lewis’s Life of Peacocke, a curious and interesting volume.

CHAP. IX. the best authority to be adduced on this point by the enemies of the Lollards. Mr. Turner's observations on the passage are as follows. "On this account we may remark, that it is a series of supposition, rumour, private information, apprehension, and anticipation. That the king was acted upon by some secret agents is clear; that the plots asserted were really formed, there is no evidence. The probability is, that Henry's generous and lofty mind was found to start at the violences which the bigotry of the papal clergy had resolved upon, and that artful measures were taken to alarm it into anger and cruelty by charges of treason, rebellion, and meditated assassination."<sup>30</sup>

It was important to render the Lollards odious, both to the government and the nation, before proceeding to those desperate measures which afforded the only hope of subduing them; and by this artifice, stale as it was, in all its parts, the end proposed was too nearly obtained. An act was now passed, which identified heresy with treason; and lord Cobham, who was apprehended about three years later, was sentenced to die, according to the penalties of this frightful statute. At the place of execution, he renewed his exhortations to the people to follow their priests only as their life and doctrine should be conformable

<sup>30</sup> Hist. ii. 453. Such also is the judgment of Rapin. It is to the men who have most corrupted Christianity, and to those who treat it as a lie, that the rumours opposed to the reputation of the christian reformers have always been most acceptable. By this holy alliance much has been done, and is

still doing, to put down the religion of the gospels. A comparison of the pages of David Hume, and those of our contemporary Dr. Lingard, as far as they relate to the character of Sir John Oldecastle, will confirm this assertion. The same will apply also to their accounts of Wycliffe.

to the word of God. The proffered service of a confessor, he rejected, affirming that the duty of confession was one to be performed to God only; and while the surrounding clergy warned the spectators against praying for the sufferer, because evidently condemned of heaven, the object of their enmity, in the spirit of a better faith, was heard interceding aloud for the salvation of his persecutors. To be hung in chains, as a traitor; and at the same time, slowly consumed to ashes as a heretic, was the sentence pronounced and executed on Sir John Oldcastle.<sup>31</sup>

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The men who knew the innocence and the worth of this illustrious sufferer, would reflect on this deed of blood, and become more confirmed in their abhorrence of the usurpation from which it had proceeded. Their children, too, would naturally imbibe a deeper and a holier hatred of the power which such atrocities were employed to preserve. We may remark, also, that in England, the principles of the reformation had never been peculiar to the mind of the poor; and that from this period, to perish in their cause, was to become allied to the privileged and the noble.

It may be no more than just, however, before concluding a work of this description, to remind the reader, that if the corruption of christianity has proceeded to so painful an extent from the

<sup>31</sup> Rot. Parl. 107—110. State Trials, i. 50. Stowe, 335. Holin. 561. Hall, 58. Godwin's Henry V. Walsingham states that his defence before the parliament was a lecture on the duty of forgiveness, and that he concluded by asserting his allegiance to Richard, whom he declared to be alive in Scot-

land. It is highly probable that the opportunity of reiterating his doctrines before that assembly would not be unimproved; and that he should avow himself a traitor, in the hope of escaping the penalties of treason, would hardly occur as a difficulty to the genius of Walsingham.

CHAP. IX. unfaithfulness of its accredited ministers, it is to the same order of men that we are chiefly indebted for the restoration of its purity. Let it never be forgotten, that in its earlier history, it was announced to the world by men in whose character its better tendencies were all beautifully exhibited; and that if that apostacy, of which Rome has long been the centre, flowed chiefly from the lust and perfidy of priests, it is with that class of men that we must associate the names of Wycliffe and Latimer, Luther and Melancthon, Zuinglius and Knox. If it was reserved to the evil passions of that order to impose on men the heaviest yoke that has oppressed their nature, it is to the generosity and the enterprise of priests that the noblest deliverance achieved for the human race must be mainly attributed. In these later times there are quarters in which if priestcraft has slain its thousands, laycraft has slain its tens of thousands.

From the eighth century to the sixteenth, the principles of the protestant reformation were all really advancing, notwithstanding the retrograde appearance of things at certain intervals. The stand made by the Paulicians was surpassed by that of the Waldenses. By the labours of Wycliffe, a still more sensible movement toward the renovation of Christendom was effected; and a man needed not the spirit of prophecy to anticipate the rise of Zuinglius and Luther, from the ashes of Huss and Jerome. Each swell in the coming tide retreated apparently quite to the point from which it had commenced, but each was more powerful than the former, and bespoke the certain influx of the mighty waters.



## CHAPTER X.

*On the Writings of John Wycliffe, D. D.*

THE writings of Wycliffe are many of them well known from the notices which occur respecting them in the numerous documents relating to the measures which were designed to suppress them. Where this kind of evidence fails, their contents, and the freedom with which certain parts of any popular treatise were repeated in others, affords the necessary aid. Such pieces as have been improperly attributed to him, and such as rest on suspicious evidence, will be assigned a separate place, and noticed accordingly. It was affirmed by an English prelate, soon after the decease of Wycliffe, that his works were quite as voluminous as those of Augustine.<sup>1</sup> A similar statement was made, and as the result of personally inspecting them, by the learned Henry Warton.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly we find, that in Bohemia, they were so numerous, that more than two hundred volumes, many of them richly decorated, were committed to the flames by Subinco Lepus, bishop of Prague. Among these, was the reformer's Exposition of the Decalogue, a copy of his

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<sup>1</sup> Cochleus. Hist. Huss, lib. i.

<sup>2</sup> Antho. Har Specimen, &c. 16.

CHAP. Homilies, and the Trialogus.<sup>3</sup> In this kingdom,  
 X. ——— whatever could be done to effect the destruction  
 of these pestilent productions was attempted; and  
 it demonstrates at once the folly of persecution,  
 and the hold which the doctrine of Wycliffe had  
 acquired on the mind of his countrymen, that at  
 least three-fourths of his pieces should be still  
 extant. Those also which are lost, appear to have  
 been chiefly scholastic tracts, of little value when  
 compared with his works which are preserved.  
 Hence, when Henry the eighth meditated reject-  
 ing the supremacy of the pope, and wished to be  
 informed respecting the doctrine of our reformer  
 on that subject, even the University of Oxford  
 could supply him with ample information. It  
 was of a kind, too, which proved highly grateful  
 to the royal theologian.

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## SECTION I.

### HIS PRINTED WORKS.

1. *Translation of the New Testament*, printed first by the  
 Rev. John Lewis; Minister of Margate, in the county of Kent,  
 in the year 1731; and again in the year 1810, by the Rev.  
 Henry Hervey Baber, Assistant Librarian of the British Mu-  
 seum. The last editor remarks, that “the text of Mr. Lewis’s  
 “edition was taken from two manuscripts, one of which was  
 “his own, and the other the property of Sir Edward Dering,  
 “Bart., of Surrenden-dering, in Kent. From the former, he  
 “transcribed for the press the Four Gospels; from the latter,  
 “the Epistles, the Dedes of Apostlis, and the Apocalips. The

<sup>3</sup> Hist. Bohem. apud Fasciculum, i. 297. Fox. Acts, &c. Lewis, c. ix.

“ transcript was collated by the learned Dr. Daniel Waterland, Master of Magdalen College, Cambridge, with ten manuscripts deposited in different Libraries at Cambridge; and afterwards compared by Mr. Lewis, with specimens purposely selected of six of the most curious manuscripts in the University of Oxford.” Of that edition Mr. Baber’s is a reprint.

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2. *Dialogorum suorum*. This work was printed in 1525, with the following title: Jo. Wiclefi viri undiquaque piissimi, dialogorum libri quatuor quorum primus divinitatem et ideas tractat: secundus universarum creationem complectitur: tertius de virtutibus vitiisque contrariis copiosissime loquitur: quartus Romanæ Ecclesiæ sacramenta, ejus pestiferam dotationem, Antichristi regnum, fratrum fraudulentam originem atque eorum hypocrisim variaque nostro ævo scitu dignissima graphice perstringit, quæ ut essent inventu facilia, singulorum librorum tum caput, tum capitis summam indice pernotavimus. M.D.XXV. 4to. The volume is without the name of the printer or place. It is said to have been printed by Oporin at Bazil; and on other grounds, it has been attributed to Valentia Kob. See Baber’s Memoirs of Wiclif, p. 50, and chap. vii. of this volume. There are copies of this work in the Libraries of Trinity College Cambridge, the Cathedral at York, and Lambeth palace. They are also to be found, though very rarely, in private collections.

The following statement of the contents of the several chapters of the *Dialogus*, will farther assist the reader in judging of that work.

#### LIBRI PRIMI.

Deus sit omnium rerum prima causa. Deus est supra omne genus. De triplici suppositione. Quomodo Deus est quicquid melius est esse que non esse. De passionibus et proprietatibus Dei. Quod Deus sit trinus. De naturali demonstratione Trinitatis. De idæis. De inventore idæarum, et quæ res habent idæas. De intelligentia Dei. De limitibus idæarum.

#### LIBRI SECUNDI.

De universitate creata. De triplici mensura æternitatis. De compositione rerum et creatione. De materiæ primæ quidditate et ejus

CHAP. pluralitate. De anima intellectiva et suis potentiis. De anathomia cerebri  
 X. et suis humoribus. De sensationibus. Si immortalitas spiritus ratione  
 deduci possit. De potentiis intellectus hominis. De angelis. De diversorum  
 angelorum diverso iudicio. De angelorum lapsu, et eorum poena. De pugna angelorum. De prædestinatione et præscientia Dei, et eorum  
 caussis. De cælo et suis partibus.

### LIBRI TERTII.

De virtutibus. Quot virtutes sunt in intellectu et voluntate. De spe. De peccato. Quomodo peccatum veniale et mortale distinguuntur. Penes quid attentatur peccati gravitas. De gratia. Omnia eveniunt necessitate absoluta. De septem peccatis mortalibus. De superbia. De humilitate. De invidia. De charitate. De ira. De patientia et mititate. De accidia, quæ medium tenet inter septem peccata mortalia. De virtute accidiæ opposita. De avaritia. De virtute opposita avaritiæ. De gula. De virtute opposita gulæ. De luxuria. De castitate. De pronitate ad peccandum. De incarnatione et morte Christi. De originali peccato. De incarnatione, quomodo Deus potuit incarnari. De numero salvandorum. Quomodo Christus excedit ordines Angelorum, et hominum. Quomodo nullus sanctorum est laudandus, nisi quia Christum est imitatus. Quomodo lex Christi in infinitum excedit alias leges.

### LIBRI QUARTI.

De signis. De eucharistia. Quid demonstretur per ly hoc. Quod post consecrationem manet panis. Probantur jam dicta superius rationibus. Quomodo et qua causa inolevit hæresis circa eucharistiæ sacramentum. Quomodo panis est corpus Domini, non existens identice corpus ipsum. De identificatione panis cum corpore Christi. Qd' corpus Christi non putrefit. Si duo corpora possunt esse in eodem loco. De baptismo. De triplici baptismo. De pænis infantum sine peccato actuali decedentium. De confirmatione. De sacramento ordinis. Hujus sacramenti confirmatio. De avaritia cleri. Sæculares propter dotationem sunt puniendi. De matrimonio. Quid sit matrimonium. De causa libelli repudii. Cum quibus verbis vel signis matrimonium celebrari debet. De pœnitentia. In quo signo possumus capere veram contritionem. De extrema unctione. De speciebus ministrorum. Quod fratres comminiscenter hæresim in ecclesia. De mendicatione fratrum. Quod mendicatio fratrum est infundabilis in scriptura. De literis fraternitatum. Quomodo fratres false vendunt sua merita et orationes. De indulgentiis. Quomodo ordines fratrum sunt introducti. In quo fratres legi Christi contrarii. De variis fratrum abusibus. Quomodo fratres seducunt regna que incolunt. De fratrum fraude atque malicia. An domini temporales debent et possunt populares inuare et defendere contra fratres. De statu hominis quem consequitur post hanc vitam. De ultimo iudicio, quare, et ubi, et quando erit. De dotibus corporum beatorum. De dotibus animæ. De pænis damnatorum. De sensibus bonorum interioribus et exterioribus.

3. *Ostiolum Wiclefi: or, Wickliffe's Wicket.* This piece has been several times printed. "The first edition," observes Mr. Baber, "was printed at Noremberch, in 1546, 8vo.; of the second edition, I know no more than what the third informs me in its title, which is as follows: 'Wickliffe's Wicket, faythfully ouerseene and corrected after the original and first copie. The lack whereof was cause of innumerable and shamfull erroures in the other edicion. As shall easily appear to them that lyste to conferre the one with the other. Ouerseene by M. C.' It is a 16mo. without date, place, or printer's name; and the language of it is accommodated to that of the time in which the book was printed. The last edition appeared in 1612, printed at Oxford, in 8vo., and was edited by the learned Henry Jackson, of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. A copy of the first edition of this very rare book is in the Bodleian Library; of the third, in Lambeth Palace Library; and of the last, in the British Museum." For an analysis of this treatise, see Chap. iii. of this volume, pp. 64—68.<sup>4</sup>

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4. *Ad Regem et Parliamentum.* A Latin copy of this tract is among the Cotton MSS. in the British Museum; a copy in English is preserved in Benet College, Cambridge; and another in Trinity College, Dublin. It was published by Dr. James, and printed at Oxford, 1608, quarto. For an epitome of this production, see Vol. II. Chap. iv. pp. 98—105.

5. *Objections of Freres.* This piece was published by Dr. James in the same volume, with the treatise last noticed, intitled, "Against the Orders of the Begging Friars." The volume is scarce, but may be seen in the British Museum, and in the Bodleian Library. For an account of this treatise, see Vol. I. Chap. ii., and Vol. II. Chap. iii. p. 203.

6. *Determinatio de Dominio.* E. Codd. MSS. Joh. Seldeni, Arch. B. 10. This paper is printed in Mr. Lewis's collection, No. 30. For the substance of it, see Vol. I. 284—289.

7. *Ad quæsitâ Regis et Concilii.* "Dubium est utrum regnum Angliæ possit legitime imminente necessitate suæ

<sup>4</sup> These references are to the present publication.

CHAP. "defencronis thesaurum regni detinere ne deferatur ad exterors  
 X. "etiam Domino Papa sub pene censurarum et virtute obedientiæ  
 "hoc petente." In Hyperoo Bodl. 163. This paper may be  
 seen in Fox i. 584. See Vol. I. 361—365.

8. *Conclusiones suæ cum responsione sua.* This document is printed in Walsingham, Hist. 206—208. *Ad parlamentum Regis* is another reply to the same conclusions, and is printed from Lewis's Life of Wycliffe, in the Appendix to the first volume of this work. This tract is noticed as Wycliffe's, by Lord Chief Justice Coke, in the fifth volume of his reports. These papers are in the Selden MSS. (Archi. B. 10.) and also a third, relating to the same series of articles. For the substance of each, see Vol. I. Chap. v.

9. *Confessio de Eucharistiâ.* This is printed by Mr. Lewis, No. 21, and may be seen in the Appendix to this volume, No. VI.

10. *De fide Eucharistiæ.* "Credo ut Christus et Apostoli  
 "docuerunt." An English copy of this confession is in the Appendix to this volume, No. VII. and the substance of it is inserted in Chap. iv. 114—117.

11. *Excusationes ad Urbanum.* "Guadeo plane detegere  
 "cuique fidem." An English copy of this letter is in the Cotton Library, and printed in the Appendix to this volume, No. VIII.

12. *Pro egentibus Presbyteris. Sunt causæ quæ urgeant pau-  
 periores*, or, "Why poor priests have no benefices." This tract is in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, and in C. C. C. Cambridge. It was first printed by Mr. Lewis. See Vol. II. pp. 164—169.

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## SECTION II.

*Including the Wycliffe manuscripts extant in England and Ireland. This series contains nearly forty MSS. preserved in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, the existence of which has been hitherto unknown to the Reformer's biographers.*

1. *De ultima Etate Ecclesiæ.* Trinity College, Dublin, Class C. CHAP.  
X.  
Tab. No. 12. See Vol. I. pp. 253—260.

2. *Expositio Decalogi.* This exposition is in the British Museum Cott. MSS. Titus D. xix. For an analysis of this work, see Vol. I. 320—329. In the Bodleian is a more extended Exposition of the Decalogue in Latin. It was minutely consulted by Dr. James, in composing his Apology for John Wicliffe.

3. *The Pore Caitif*, sometimes called *Pauper Rusticus*; sometimes *Confessio derelicti Pauperis*, consists of a series of tracts in English, designed for the instruction of the poorer classes of the people in the elements of the christian religion. It is described by its author as “sufficient to teach simple men and women, of good will, the right way to heaven.” The comments on the *Apostles' creed*, and the *pater-noster*, are followed by pieces with the following titles. *Sweet sentences, exciting men and women to heavenly desire. Virtuous patience. Of temptation. The charter of heaven. Of ghostly battle. The name Jesus. The love of Jesu. The desire of Jesu. Of very meekness. The effect of man's will. Active and contemplative life. The mirror of maidens.* At the conclusion of the last piece in this collection are the words, “Here endeth this book, that is clepid the Pore Caitif.” Copies of this work are in the British Museum, Lambeth Library, and Trinity College Dublin.

4. *De Veritate Scripturæ.* Bibl. Bodl. Archi. A. 3021. 32. Trin. Coll. Dub. Class. C. Tab. 1. No. 24. See this volume, pp. 7, 8.

5. *De Hypocritarum Imposturis.* This tract is in English, beginning—“Crist commandith to his discipulis, and to alle



CHAP. "Christen men to understonde and flee the sour dow of Pha-  
 X. "risees which is ypocrisy." C.C.C. Cambridge. Trin. Coll. Dub. See Vol. II. pp. 199—202. The following pieces also, to No. 19, are in the same collections.

6. *De Obedientiâ Prælatorum*. It begins, "Prelates slandren poor priests and other Cristen men, that they will not obesthe to their Sovereigns," &c. &c. See Vol. II. pp. 182—184.

7. *De Clericis Possessionariis*, which begins, "Clerkes Possessioners fordon priesthood, knighthood, and commoners." See Vol. II. pp. 192, 193.

8. *Impedimenta Evangelizantium*. This is the same with the piece described as, "Of Feigned Contemplatif Life," which thus begins—"First, when true men teach by God's law, wit, and reason, that eche Priest oweth to do his wit, and his will, to preche Christ's gospel," &c. &c. See Vol. II. pp. 326—328.

9. *Pro amplexando Evangelio*. The English title of this piece is, "How religious Men should kepe certain Articles;" beginning thus—"Christen men, preyen meekly and devoutly to Almighty God, that he grant his grace for his endless mercy to our religious, both possessioners and mendicants," &c. &c. The articles are numerous, but the notices connected with them are very brief.

10. *How Satanas and his Priests, and his feyned Religions, casten by three cursed Heresies to destroy all good living and meytuning all manner of sin*. It begins thus—"As Almighty God in Trinity ordeineth men to come to the bliss of heaven by three grounds," &c. &c. See Vol. II. pp. 184—186.

11. *De Nequitiiis ejusdem*. This piece, in English, has a title beginning with the words—"How Antichrist and his Clerks travellen to destroy holy Writ, and to make Cristen Men unstable in the faith," &c. &c. See Vol. II. pp. 205—209.

12. *Super Testamento Francisci*. Wycliffe's remarks on this Testament begin thus—"But here the Menours sayn that the pope dischargeth them of this testament." The comment is preceded by a translation of the rule of St. Francis, as given by Matthew Paris.

13. *For Three Skills Lords shulden constrain Clerks to live in*

*meekness, wilfull poverty, and discreet penance and ghostly CHAP. X.*  
*traveile.* It begins thus—"Open teaching of God's law, old  
 "and new, open ensample of Christ's life, and his glorious  
 "Apostles," &c. &c. See Vol. II. p. 186.

14. *De Prelatis, et eorum Officio.* This is the piece so frequently cited as "Of Prelates;" beginning thus—"Here it  
 "telleth of Prelates, that Prelates leaven preching of the Gos-  
 "pel, and ben gostly manquellers of men's souls." See Vol. II.  
 pp. 204, 205.

15. *Speculum de Antichristo.* The English copy of this tract professes to describe "How Antichrist and his Clerks feren  
 "true Priests fro preching of Christ's Gospel by four Deceits." It commences thus—"First, they seyn that preching of the  
 "Gospel maketh dissension and enmity." See Vol. II. pp. 188—190.

16. *De Clericorum Ordinatione.* The copy of this preserved, is also in English, intituled, "Of the Order of Priesthood;" beginning—"For the order of priesthood is ordained of God,  
 "both in the old law, and in the new." See Vol. II. pp. 204, 205.

17. *De Dominis et Servis.* *Servi primum juste ac libenter, or,*  
*"Of Servants and Lords,* how eche shull kepe his Degree;" beginning—"First, servants shullen truly and gladly serve to  
 "their lords or masters." See Vol. II. pp. 186, 187.

18. *How Prayer of good Men helpeth much, and Prayer of sinfull Men displeaseth God, and harmeth themselves and other Men;* beginning—"Our Lord Jesu Christ techeth us to pray  
 "evermore for all nedefull things both to body and soul." -See Vol. II. pp. 190—192.

19. *De Episcoporum Erroribus;* beginning—"There bin eight  
 "things by which simple Christen men ben deceyed." Also, "*De xxxiii erroribus Curatorum;*" beginning—"For the office  
 "of curates is ordained of God." Of these pieces the reader may form his judgment from that Of Prelates, and that for the Order of Priesthood. See Vol. II. pp. 204, 205.

20. *How Satanas and his Children turnen works of mercy upon Sodom, and deceyven men therein;* beginning—"First, Christ  
 "commandeth men of power to feed hungry poor men: the

CHAP "fend and his techen to make costly feasts, and waste many  
X. "goods on lords," C.C.C. Cambridge.

21. *A short Rule of Life for eche Man, in general, and for Priests, and Lords, and Labourers in special*; beginning—"First, when thou risest, or fully wakest, think on the goodness of thy God, how for his own goodness, and none other nede, he made all things of nought," C.C.C. Cambridge. This piece is followed by a brief comment on *The Ave Maria*.

22. *Of Wedded Men and Wives*; beginning—"Our Lord God Almighty speaketh in his law of tweie matrimonies or wedlocks," &c. &c. C.C.C. Cambridge. See Vol. I. p. 235.

23. *Of good preching Priests*; beginning—"The first general point of poor priests that prechen in England, is this," &c. &c. C.C.C. Cambridge. See Vol. II. pp. 187, 188.

24. *The great Sentence of the Curse Expounded*; beginning—"First, all heretics against the faith of holy writ, ben cursed solemnly, four times in the year." C.C.C. Cambridge. See Vol. II. pp. 203, 204.

25. *De Blasphenia contra Fratres*; beginning—"It is seide that three things stourblin this realme, and specially heresie." Bibl. Bodl. Archiv. A. 83.

26. *De Dominio Divino*, is a tract of four pages; beginning—"Sith false glossiris maken Goddis law derk, and letten secular men to susteyne, and kepe it, of sich false glossis schulde each man bewar."

27. *Supr Oratione Dominica*; beginning—"When we seyn Our Fader that art in heaven, we ben taught."

28. *Ad ducem Glocestrie contra Fraterculum*; beginning—"Most worshipful and gentlest Lord Duke of Gloucester." Trin. Coll. Dub. See Vol. II. p. 129.

29. *De Sathanæ astu contra Fidem*; beginning—"The fend seeketh many ways to mar men in belief." This tract extends to two pages only.

30. *Sermones in Epistolas*, and *Sermones in Evangelia*, are the titles of his homilies, or parochial discourses. Copies of these, more or less perfect, and some of them beautifully written, are in the manuscript collections of the British Museum, Cam-

bridge, Trinity College, Dublin, and elsewhere. See Vol. II. CHAP. X.  
Chap. i.

31. *Transtulit in Anglicum sermonem Biblia tota*, &c. Of this memorable work, several copies are extant; as in the British Museum and Lambeth Palace. The costs of transcribing obliged our ancestors to secure parts of the sacred volume; sometimes including the four gospels, sometimes the epistles of St. Paul, and not unfrequently, still smaller portions. Dr. Whitaker states, (*Hist. of Richmondshire*, Art. Wycliffe,) that the copy of Wycliffe's Bible, in Lambeth Palace, is beautifully illuminated; and suggests that the portrait of Sir Antonio More was probably obtained from such a source. But there is not, nor has there ever been, a manuscript at all of that description in the Lambeth Library. See Appendix, No. I. and Vol. II. Chap. ii.

32. *Translatio Clementis Lanthoniensis*. "In the Earl of Oxford's Library," observes Mr. Lewis, "is a MS. entitled, 'John Wiclif's Translation of Clement Lanthon's Harmony of the Gospels, which begins thus—'Clement, a Preest of the Chirche of Lanthonth,'" in 12 parts. Lanthon was an Austin Friar, who flourished in 1154. *Leland de Scrip. Brit.* 226. There is a copy of this work in the British Museum, Harl. MSS. 1862.

33. *De Stipendiis Ministrorum*. This tract is extant in English, intituled, "How men shulden find Priests," and beginning—"Think wisely, ye men that finden priestes, that ye don this alms for God's love, and help of your soules, and help of Christen men." C. C. C. Cambridge.

34. *De Ecclesiæ Dominio*; in English, "Of the Chirche of Christ, and of hir Membris, and of hir Governauce;" beginning thus—"Christis Chirche is his spouse, that hath three parts," &c. &c. *Bib. Reg.* 18, 13, ix. It is also in Trin. Coll. Dub. It is frequently cited in the preceding chapters.

35. *In Apocalypsin Joannis*. The exposition is introduced by a prologue, and the former begins with the words—"The doyng of Seynt Joon bitokeneth Prelatis of hooli Chirche, that understondith the vois of the Gospels." *Bib. Reg.* E. 1732, p. 67.

CHAP. 36. *De Vita Sacerdotum*. "This peril of Freris is the last of  
X. "eight that falles to men in this way." Bibl. Bodl. Archi.  
A. 3072. See Vol. II. 253.

37. *Speculum secularium Dominorum*. Bibl. Bodl. Archim.  
A. 3849, Bibl. Reg.

38. *De Incarnatione Verbi*. Bibl. Reg. E. 270 fol. This  
piece is in Latin; beginning, "Prælibato tractatu De Anima,"  
&c. &c.

39. *De Ecclesia Catholicâ*, sometimes called, *De fide Catholicâ*,  
is a manuscript preserved in the Bodleian, and a copy taken  
from it, by Dr. James, is in the Lambeth Library.

40. *De Modo Oraudi*. On the twelve lettyngis of prayer.  
Cott. MSS. Titus, D. xix. Bibl. Bodl.

41. *Epistola ad simplices Sacerdotes*. This piece does not  
reach beyond a page, and may be seen in the British Museum.  
Bibl. Reg. 17, B. xvii.

42. *De Virtutibus et Vitiis*. This treats of religious and moral  
obligations after the fashion of that age. Cott. MSS. Titus,  
D. xix. A production of the same kind, but somewhat different  
from the former, may be seen, Bibl. Reg. 7, A. xxvi. Like  
the Pore Caitif, it was evidently designed to present an epitome  
of religious instruction to the poorer classes.

43. *De Sermone Domini in Monte*, and *Octo Beatitudines*, are  
different names of the same discourse. From the Reformer's  
exposition of the Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, seventy-four  
erroneous opinions were extracted. There is a sermon under  
this name in the British Museum, Cott. MSS. Titus, D. xix.  
But it must have been his more extended exposition of that  
chapter which supplied his enemies with such materiel for  
accusation. MS. Twini. A. 216. See No. 13, p. 391.

44. *De Papâ Romanâ*, or *Schisma Papæ*. Mr. Baber states  
that this tract is in the Bodleian, but it has eluded my search.  
There is a copy in Trin. Coll. Dub. See Vol. II. 3—6.

45. *De Questionibus variis contra Clerum*. Lambeth Library,  
Cot. MSS. 151.

46. In the library of Trinity College, Cambridge, is a large  
manuscript volume, including the following pieces, several of  
which are known to be those of Wycliffe, as the 10th and 11th,

which are noticed by Huss; (Lewis, c. ix. 179, Baber,) and of the rest, I find several attributed to the Reformer in the hand-writing of the transcriber. MS. 326. 8. C. 5. 8. CHAP. X.

1. *De ente communi.* In primis supponitur ens esse, pp. 1—5.

2. *De ente primo.* Extenso ente secundum ejus maximam ampliacionem, pp. 5—9.

3. *De purgando errores, et veritate in communi.* Consequens est purgare errores, pp. 9—15.

4. *De purgando errores, et universalibus in communi.* Tractatu continentur dicta de universalibus, pp. 15—23.

5. *De universalibus.* Tractatus de universalibus continet 16 capitula cujus primum, pp. 23—37.

6. *De tempore.* In tractando de tempore sunt, &c. &c. pp. 37—47.

7. *De intellectione Dei.* Illorum quæ in sunt Deo, &c. &c. pp. 47—53.

8. *De scientia Dei.* Ex dictis superius satis liquet, &c. &c. pp. 53—70.

9. *De volitione Dei.* Tractando de volitione Dei, &c. &c. pp. 70—91.

10. *De personarum distinctione.* Superest investigare de distinctione, &c. &c. pp. 91—115.

11. *De ideis.* Tractando de ydeis primo oportet, &c. &c. pp. 115—122.

12. *De potentia productiva Dei.* Veritatum quas Deus non potest renovare, &c. &c. pp. 122—134.

13. *De sermone Domini.* Licet totum Evangelium, pp. 134—141.

47. In a volume preserved in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, is a series of treatises described as follows: Class C. Tab. 1. No. 23.

1. *Tractatus Evangelii de Sermone Domini in Monte, cum Expositorio Orationis Dominica.* Dividetur in tres Libros.

2. *Tractatus de Antichristo, cum Expositorio in xxiii. xxiv. xxv. cap. Matthæi.*

CHAP. 3. *Tractatus in Sermonem Domini, quem facerat valedicendo*  
 X. *Discipulis suis.*

4. *Tractatus de Statu Innocentiæ.*

5. *Tractatus de tempore in 13 capitulis.*

6. *Expositio quorundum locorum Scripturæ*, Tit. ii. cap. Heb. i. cap. et Isaïæ xxv. cap. There is also an Exposition of 1 Thessalonians iv. and of John xi. But these are merely parts of his homilies. The volume extends to 400 pages; and what is peculiar to this collection of Wycliffe's MSS. it has a copious index.

1. Trin. Coll. Dub. Class C. Tab. 1. No. 24. *De Simonia.*

2. *De Apostasic.* The first piece extends about forty small folio pages; the second to about half that number; the last consists of about eight pages.

3. *De Blasphemia.* Another volume in the same library contains a MS. entitled, "*Of apostacy, and the possessions of clerks.*" This volume farther contains the following tracts. *Of pscudo friars. Of the eight woes which God wished to friars. Of Antichrist and his ways. Of Antichrist's song in the church. A treatise of prayer. A treatise on confession. A tract of Christian obedience*; beginning—"Christ forsooth did "all that he could to obey to lords." In the volume, there are several separate homilies, meditations on various subjects, and a short treatise, beginning—"How are questions and "answers put that are written hereafter." The collection forms a duodecimo volume of about 400 pages, written with a very small, but legible character. Class C. Tab. 5. No. 6.

48. On the Seven Deadly Sins. Bibl. Bodl. See Vol. II. pp. 209—213.

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## SECTION III.

*The following pieces are in the Imperial Library of Vienna; the catalogue of which may be seen in the British Museum.*

*De minoribus fratribus se extollentibus. De sectis monachorum. De quatuor sectis novellis. De fundatione sectarum. De sectarum perfidiâ. De solutione Sathanæ. De Dæmonio meridiano. Responsiones ad XIV argumenta Radulphi Strodi. Litera parva ad quendam socium. Speculum militantis ecclesiæ. De oratione et ecclesiæ purgatione. De gradibus cleri. De graduationibus. De duobus generibus hereticorum. De quatuor interpretationibus. Super impositis articulis. Socii argumentum contra veritatem. De citationibus frivolis et aliis versutiis Antichristi. De juramento Arnoldi (de Grannario) collectoris Papæ. De sex jugis. De exhortatione novi doctoris.<sup>5</sup> De ordine Christiano. De vaticinatione. Dialogus inter veritatem et mendacium. Epistola, de peccato in Spiritum Sanctum. Litera parva ad quendam Socium. Litera ad Episcopium Lincoln. de amore, sive de quintuplici quæstione. Epistola ad Archiepiscopum Cantuar. De cucharistiâ et penitentiâ. De octo quæstionibus propositis discipulo. De triplici vinculo amoris.*

CHAP.  
X.

## SECTION IV.

*The following are the titles of pieces which are known only by these names.*

*Many were on the questions of science, and others were probably different designations of the same tracts.*

*Quæstiones logicales. Logica de singulis. Logica de aggregatis. De propositionibus temporalibus. De insolubilibus. De exclusivis et exceptivis. De causalibus. De comparativis. De*

<sup>5</sup> A Treatise upon Relative Duties.

exercise performed previous to obtaining his degree of doctor in divinity.

<sup>6</sup> This is supposed to have been the

CHAP. conditionalibus. *De disjunctivis. Grammaticæ tropi. Meta-*  
 X. *physica vulgaris. Metaphysica novella. De summâ intellec-*  


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*tualium. De formis idealibus. De spiritu quolibet. De*  
*speciebus hypotheticis. De esse intelligibili creaturæ. De esse*  
*in suo prolixo. De unâ communis generis assentiâ. De essentiâ*  
*accidentium. De temporis ampliacione. De physica naturali.*  
*De intentione physicâ. De materiâ et formâ. De materiâ*  
*cœlestium. De raritate et densitate. De motu locali. De*  
*velocitate motus localis. Dialogus de fratribus. Johannes a*  
*rure contra fratres. De charitate fraternâ. Dæmonum æstus*  
*in subvertendâ religione. De Diabolo millenario. De perverso*  
*Antichristi dogmate. Defensio contra impios. Responsiones ad*  
*argumenta monachi de Salley. De unitate Christi. De unico*  
*salutis Agno. Christus alius non expectandus. De humanitate*  
*Christi. De defectione a Christo. De fide et perfidiâ. De*  
*fide sacramentorum. De fide Evangelii. Constitutiones ec-*  
*clesiæ. De censuris ecclesiæ. De sacerdotio Levitico. De*  
*sacerdotio Christi. De statuendis pastoribus ad plebem. De*  
*ordine sacerdotali. De non saginandis sacerdotibus. De mini-*  
*strorum conjugio. Cogendi sacerdotes ad honestatem. De*  
*ritibus sacramentorum. De quidditate hostiæ consecratæ. De*  
*quintuplici Evangelio. De Trinitate. De excommunicatis*  
*absolvendis. Distinctiones rerum Theologicarum. De fonte*  
*errorum. De falsatoribus legis divinæ. De immortalitate*  
*animæ. Ceremoniarum chronicon. De dilectione. Concor-*  
*dantiæ doctorum. De contrarietate duorum dominorum. De*  
*lege divinâ. De necessitate futurorum. De operibus spiri-*  
*tualibus. De operibus corporalibus. De ordinariâ laicorum.*  
*De purgatorio piorum. Positiones variæ. Replicationes et*  
*positiones. De præscito ad beatitudinem. De quaternario doc-*  
*torum. De religiosis privatis. De studio lectionis. De sereitute*  
*civili. Theologiæ placita. De virtute orandi. De compo-*  
*sitione hominis. De homine misero. Scholia scripturarum.*  
*Glossæ scripturarum. Glossæ vulgares. Glossæ manuales.*  
*Glossæ novella. Lectiones in Daniele.*

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## SECTION V.

*The following works, with the exception of the last, have been improperly attributed to Wycliffe.*

*De Tribus Sagittis. Speculum Peccatoris. The Confession of* CHAP.  
*St. Brandoun. Ghostly and Fleshly Love.* The two former of X.  
 these are attributed on better evidence to the Hermit Hampole.

*Commentarii in Psalterium, et Cantica Sacra.* This also is evidently the production of Hampole, (Baber, 54.) The writer of a manuscript note to a copy of this work in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge, states, that this commentary became popular with the disciples of Wycliffe, and that the later transcripts of it were accordingly greatly interpolated with the doctrine of the Lollards. The correctness of this statement is hardly questionable, and it will sufficiently account for the circumstance of the entire work being ascribed to our reformer. There is a copy in the British Museum.

*Elucidarium Bibliorum.* Sometimes described as *Prologus ad integram Bibliorum Versionem*, is the work of which the reader will find an account in the second chapter of this volume. The MS. is in the British Museum, Harl. MSS. 1666. It has been twice printed; first at the press of John Gowghe, in 1536, subsequently by Robert Crowley, in 1550. The title of the first edition is, *The Dore of Holy Scriptures*. In the second, it is thus described. *The pathway to perfect knowledge, the true cōpye of a prologue, wrytten about two hundred yeaes paste by John Wycliffe, (as maye justly be gathered bi that, that John Bale hath wrytten of him in his Boke, intituled the summarie of the famouse writers of the Isle of Great Britaine,) the original whereof is found wrytten in an old English Bible, betwixt the Olde Testament and the Nene. Which Bible remaineth now in the Kyng his majesties chamber.* That this work was not the production of Wycliffe, but of some zealous disciple after his death, is placed beyond doubt by its contents. See Baber, pp. 52, 53, and Lewis, c. ix., and Chap. ii. of this volume.

CHAP. *Ecclesie Regimen* is a work consisting of a series of articles,  
X.  

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expressive in almost every sentence of the doctrine of Wycliffe. In the copy of these articles in the British Museum, there appears to be a reference to Gerson, the celebrated Parisian divine, which, if so intended, must prove that copy of the work to be of a date subsequent to the time of Wycliffe. The piece, however, is evidently a compilation from the writings of our reformer, whether made by himself or a disciple, as it not only contains a summary of his doctrine, but much of his language.

## NOTES.

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### NOTE A.

WE have seen that Richard's first parliament was composed of discordant elements.<sup>1</sup> The system of taxation, also, had long been so unusually burdensome, if not oppressive, as to call forth the loud and the almost unceasing murmurs of the people. It was not without reason, therefore, that the bishop of Rochester discoursed to the parties assembled at the coronation, on the importance of dismissing petty feuds, of encouraging private virtue, and of avoiding all needless exaction from the people.<sup>2</sup> In the parliament of the following year, it was stated by the chancellor that Cherbourg, Brest, Calais, Bourdeaux, and Bayonne, still acknowledged the sovereignty of England; that these formed most important entrances into France; and that a moderate expenditure would be sufficient to retain them. But the commons, whether suspecting the sincerity of this plea, or really wise enough to wish the abandonment of the meditated conquest of the rival country, expressed themselves opposed to any grants of the public money to be expended on garrisons beyond the limits of the kingdom. In reply to this, it was urged that the towns adverted to were "the barbicans of England," and the lower house being compelled to relinquish the

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I. Chap. iv. Rot. Parl. iii. 3—7.

<sup>2</sup> Wals. 196.

above, and some other pretexts, a subsidy, though on a reduced scale, was reluctantly voted.<sup>3</sup> The interval, however, to the meeting of the parliament in 1379, only witnessed the increasing difficulties of the government; the crown jewels had been pledged to meet the existing demands; and the commons again uttered the language of surprise and displeasure—nor did they yield their assent to the new subsidy proposed until nine persons had been appointed to ascertain the real cause of these alarming exigencies. Still disaster or extravagance attended the ministers of the sovereign, and to a repetition of the recent claims on the property of the community it was replied, that had the king been well advised in his measures and expences, the impoverished commons would not have been exposed to this series of unreasonable demands. It was in consequence required, and as the condition of the grant to be made, that as the king was now “of good discretion,” the council of twelve which had been appointed by his first parliament should be removed; that commissioners should be immediately chosen to investigate the expences of the royal household; and that such faults as might be discovered should be stated to the king, and corrected. A few months only intervened between the dissolution of this parliament and the convening of another. The king was now declared to be “enormously in debt,” and the commons in accepting the offer of the crown to examine the public accounts,<sup>4</sup> found the exchequer involved to the extent of a hundred and sixty thousand pounds. This was pronounced to be “most outrageous and insupportable.”<sup>5</sup> The debate, however, which ensued, ended in the adoption of a pole tax,—a mode of contribution which fell upon each person, and upon each according to his rank.<sup>6</sup> But even this grant, probably from the ignorance of statistics common to the period, failed to

<sup>3</sup> Rot. Parl. iii. 56, 57.

<sup>4</sup> This offer was a novelty in our parliamentary history, and shows the extreme necessities of the court.

<sup>5</sup> Rot. Parl. iii. 71—90.

<sup>6</sup> The following was the rate of contribution imposed on the higher

classes. A duke, 6*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.*; an earl or a countess, 4*l.*; a baron, banneret, baroness, or knight, 2*l.*; a bachelor, an esquire, and the widows of such, 1*l.*; a serjeant, 2*l.*; a judge, 5*l.* Rot. Parl. iii. 57.

meet a moiety of the expence which had been incurred within six months by the expedition to Brittany alone. The tax was accordingly renewed, and upon an increased ratio; but whether from timidity or negligence on the part of the collectors, or from bad management in the court, this imposition failed to realize the amount of the former.<sup>7</sup> A desperate measure was now resorted to, and the guilt of the insurrection which followed must be attributed, mainly, if not entirely, to its abettors.

Four persons proffered their services to ascertain the correctness of the payments made by Kent, Norfolk, and their neighbourhood. This offer was accepted. In their exactions these civic inquisitors were stimulated by the prospect of a large reward, and by their conviction that the scrutiny of the court would be but feebly exercised with respect to the mode in which the contribution might be obtained, should the amount be such as to remove its present embarrassment.<sup>8</sup> The last provision of the parliament in relation to this tax, had rendered each person liable at the age of fifteen; and we may conceive of the many lesser insults which were offered to the already irritated feelings of the people by these collectors, from the circumstance that as often as the age of the females in a household became the matter of dispute, these ruffians insisted on a mode of ascertaining the fact which outraged every feeling of modesty. To save their daughters from the treatment with which they were menaced, many parents submitted to the imposition where it was unjust.<sup>9</sup> But to suppose that a despotism of this kind could have been long endured by our ancestors in the fourteenth century, would be to betray a very mistaken estimate of their character—especially as it was affected by the commerce and the intercourse of our towns and cities.

The men of Kent were the first to deliberate on the duty of resistance, but no leader appeared to command their confidence. A baker of Fobbing, in Essex, either more courageous than his neighbours, or less sensible to danger, was the first to raise the standard of revolt.<sup>10</sup> The populace applauded his example,

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Knighton, 2632, 2633.

Ibid. 2632.



and the flame once kindled, fled instantaneously through that county, and through the towns and villages of Kent. Belknap, chief justice of the common pleas, was dispatched to restore tranquillity among the Essex men by inflicting a signal punishment on the leading insurgents. But as the grand jury began to find indictments, the multitude rose, burst into their apartments, and cutting off their heads, compelled the judge to swear that he would desist from all such proceedings. Two efforts of the same description were subsequently made in Kent, but in both instances, as in the present, the effect was rather to augment than to subdue the disaffection.<sup>11</sup> It was in the month of May that the men of Essex assembled to the amount of five thousand, armed with almost every variety of weapon. To these additions were daily made, and at the head of this growing multitude was an obscure individual known in the records of the period under the assumed name of Jack Straw. As the effect of accident, a person equally humble in his origin, and bearing the name of Wat Tyler, or Walter the Tyler, was raised to the same distinction by the populace of Kent.<sup>12</sup> Walter was a tradesman in the town of Dartford. During his absence from home, a collector of the obnoxious tax entered his house, and a dispute presently arose between its mistress and the officer, respecting the age of a young female who stood in the apartment. To secure the sum demanded, the servant of the government proceeded toward that inspection of the girl's person which, as the shortest mode of ending such discussions, had been attempted in previous instances. The indignation of the mother, and the terror of the daughter, were instantly vented in loud cries, their neighbours came running to the spot, and tidings of the outrage reaching the ear of Wat Tyler, he abandoned his work, fled through the town with his tool in his hand, and placing himself before the incendiary, demanded in the spirit of a man and a father, on what authority he had dared so to conduct himself. But the knave was inured to his business: his language became abusive; and he descended to level a blow at his opponent. This was not to be

<sup>11</sup> Stowe, 281.

<sup>12</sup> Wals. 258. Knighton, 2633, 2634. Stowe, 281.

borne, the insulted parent avoided the weapon raised against him, and with a single stroke of his lathing instrument—still in his hand—laid the agent of oppression dead at his feet. A new scene now opened to the Tyler of Dartford. He stood committed against the government of his country, and could see no prospect of safety, but in exile, or in the favour of the people—and the latter, uncertain as its power or continuance might be, would almost necessarily occur to such a man as his best security. The population of the immediate neighbourhood gathered instantly around him, expressed their admiration of his conduct, and vowed to defend him against any movement of his enemies. Within a few weeks Walter appeared in the vicinity of the capital, as the leader of armed men, who, with their followers, are presumed to have numbered a hundred thousand persons.

Hitherto the lords of the aristocracy, who were regarded as the counsellors of the sovereign, whether churchmen or laymen, appear to have been the exclusive objects of resentment. At Maidstone, the prison of the archbishop was broken open, and one John Ball, described as a profligate and revolutionary priest, was set at liberty; and it is said was announced as the future primate.<sup>13</sup> To the day, however, in which the insurgents appeared on Blackheath, the oath exacted of their followers was fidelity to Richard and the commons; and also that no king should be acknowledged by the name of John—a provision which plainly referred to the duke of Lancaster.<sup>14</sup> To the approaching multitude a messenger was now dispatched, who, in the name of the king, required to know the cause of this tumult. It was replied, that they sought an audience of the sovereign. Some of the counsellors of Richard advised his compliance, but Sudbury, archbishop of Canterbury, and chancellor of the realm, opposed the measure, and indulged in the most contemptuous language respecting the parties who had thus ventured to claim the royal notice. Unfortunately, his advice, and his expressions reached the ear of the malcontents, and they were not to be forgotten.<sup>15</sup> The magistrates of the

<sup>13</sup> Knighton.<sup>14</sup> Wals. 258. Rot. Parl. iii. 99.<sup>15</sup> Wals. 259.

metropolis would have closed their gates against Walter, and the host of his adherents, but the populace within shared in the discontent manifested without, and passing London Bridge, the upland multitude flowed unchecked into the city.<sup>16</sup> The king, with a few members of his court, and about two hundred knights, fled to the protection of the Tower. Some days however passed, and the insurgents, little as they appeared to be disciplined, were kept from violence. They paid for the whole of their provisions; and continued to express it as their determination to return to their home, as soon as the traitors of the land should be secured and punished.<sup>17</sup> But time was no longer to be lost, and Richard at length agreed to confer with their leaders at Mile End. There the king granted a charter, which declared the parties assembled free, and abolished all servitude and villanage.

But while the main body of the disaffected were thus employed, a rabble which still lingered near the Tower, suddenly collected their strength, and forced an entrance. Overpowering the knights within, they seized the archbishop, the treasurer of the realm, and Legg, who had been commissioner of the poletax, with several others. These they reproached as traitors, and having in the madness of popular triumph, cut off their heads, bore them on lances through the streets.<sup>18</sup>

Every thing recorded of the insurgents from this unhappy day, is marked by violence, and the wildest disorder. Whether suspecting that no faith could be placed in the promises of a court which had suffered so greatly from them, or intoxicated beyond their power of resistance by apparent success, it appears that through the week ensuing, their chief employments were pillage, drunkenness, and murder. Three times their demands on the government were complied with, but without allaying the tumult; and in Smithfield, Richard again descended to confer with them. Walter, it appears, was still the person of principal influence with the multitude, and it is probable that he had yielded, in some degree, to the growing spirit of insubordination. By the attendants of Richard, the freedom of his conduct was

<sup>16</sup> Wals. 259.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 260.

<sup>18</sup> Knighton, 2674, 2635. Wilkins, iii. 153. Wals. 260—263.

deemed an insult to their sovereign; and as the king hesitated to pronounce the abolition of the forest and game laws, the bold insurgent approached so near to the royal person, as to excite suspicion of some sinister design. Walworth, the mayor of London, seized his spear, and in a moment it was planted in the neck of the rebel; and from the indignation of another attendant, the misguided man received a second wound in the side. He rose convulsively, once and again, but in a few minutes was no more. His followers, roused by the deed, instantly grasped their weapons to avenge it; when the king, in the confidence of youth, and aware perhaps that the disaffection even yet referred not to himself, fled to their ranks, and exclaimed, "Why, my liege men, this clamour, will you kill your king? Heed not the death of a traitor, I will be your leader; come, follow me to the fields, and what you ask, you shall have." Charmed with the spirit and confidence of the youthful monarch, they obeyed his summons; but while engaged in this parley, were alarmed by the approach of an armed force, under the command of Sir Robert Knowles. The panic was suddenly diffused, and the followers of Walter fled in every direction to assemble no more. The king humanely forbade pursuit, but the concessions which had been made were all rescinded, and some hundreds of the offenders, in their various counties, were doomed to perish by the hand of the executioner."<sup>19</sup>

The reader must be aware, that in proportion to the degeneracy of the ecclesiastical orders, has been their adherence to the maxim, that to diminish the popular reverence of the ministers of religion, must be to sap the foundation of the civil power. Nor is the plea strictly devoid of truth. But it is one which has too frequently aided unworthy men in annexing the worst penalties of criminal justice, to what they have judged as delinquencies in religious opinion. It would have been singular, therefore, had no effort been made to exhibit the religious doctrine of our reformer, so hostile to the worldly pretensions of the existing clergy, as scattering the seeds of civil dis-

<sup>19</sup> Knighton, 2636, 2637. Wals. 264, 265. Rymer, vii. 316, 317. Rot. Parl. iii. 103, 111.

affection. Its influence, however, as far as we can ascertain, was rather to restrain the violence of the disorderly multitude, in this instance, than to produce their spirit of misrule.

The fact that various countries in which no reformer of Wycliffe's character was known, had recently become the scene of similar tumults, and such as were peculiarly hostile to many of the prevailing superstitions, might be sufficient to explain the origin of the convulsion in 1381, without attributing it, in any important degree, to the labours of the rector of Lutterworth. Nearly thirty years previously, the disbanded mercenaries of France had filled the provinces of that kingdom with their depredations; and unawed by the terrors of the church, had compelled the pontiff to redeem himself in Avignon, at the cost of forty thousand crowns.<sup>20</sup> These banditti, who were known by the name of "the companies," were no sooner conducted by the celebrated du Guesclin to the war against Peter of Castile, than the peasantry of the French provinces rose against their rulers, and their insurrection, resembling that of the English populace in 1381, both in its origin, and in various of its features, was more extended, of longer duration, and marked by much greater atrocities.<sup>21</sup> The increase of taxation which had now become common to nearly all the governments of Europe, was accompanied by an increase of wastefulness on the part of sovereigns and their ministers; and, unfortunately for such propensities, there arose at the same time a powerful disposition on the part of the people to criticise the measures of their rulers, as those of servants in relation to the community. From these causes sprung the memorable rebellion of the Flemings; and over other states, their example and successes shed a dangerous influence. It was at this crisis, and while the disorders which we have noticed as arising in England were on the eve of breaking forth, that the peasantry of France again betrayed every sign of restlessness; and the citizens of Paris became foremost in resisting the demands of the national autho-

<sup>20</sup> Froissart, 187. These daring marauders were led by one Arnaud de Cervole, a chieftain who is described as holding an ecclesiastical benefice,

and as being known in consequence by the name of l'Archipêtre.

<sup>21</sup> D'Achery, *Spicilegium*, iii. 114.

rities on their pecuniary resources. It was believed also, by Froissart, that had the efforts of the French government to quell the insurrection of the citizens of Ghent, and their various adherents, proved a failure, the flame of rebellion must have been speedily diffused through the whole of their own territories. It was likewise the opinion of that historian, that the rising under Wat Tyler would hardly have occurred in the absence of the stimulus supplied by these examples. Nothing indeed can be more evident than that such convulsive appearances were less the result of any local peculiarities, than of a general movement in the system of European society. From various causes, the notions of a representative government, and of responsible rulers, began to grow familiar to the popular apprehension, and by this new state of things, the authorities which were not obviously founded in public utility, were every where menaced with overthrow.<sup>22</sup>

But there were powerful ebullitions of popular feeling during the middle ages, and such as not a little affected the pretensions both of kings and churchmen, where no burden imposed by the civil authorities, nor any thing resembling the spirit of enlightened reformation in relation to the church, can be assigned as the cause. It is the statement of an historian equally distinguished by his research, and by the sobriety of his views, that "no denomination of christians has produced, or even "sanctioned, more fanaticism than the church of Rome."<sup>22</sup> It is certain that during the ages adverted to, its votaries were familiarised from their cradle with the doctrine of supernatural agencies in the government of the world; and that they were

<sup>22</sup> Froissart, c. 37. 84. 120. Mr. Hallam remarks, while referring to these facts, "I would advise the historical student to acquaint himself with these transactions, and with the corresponding tumults at Paris. They are among the eternal lessons of history; for the unjust encroachments of courts, the intemperate passions of the multitude, the ambition of demagogues, the cruelty of victorious factions, will never cease

"to have their parallels and their analogies; while the military achievements of distant times afford, in general, no instruction, and can hardly occupy too little of our time in historical studies," i. 91. Froissart's account of the English insurrection differs in some important particulars from that given above, but I have followed the authorities which appeared to me to be most correctly informed.

<sup>23</sup> Hallam, iii. 311.

as commonly in total ignorance respecting the nature of every such interposition. The term miracle was almost deprived of its meaning, from the frequency with which it was conferred on real or imaginary occurrences; and the gifts of inspiration were believed to be scarcely less prevalent. Both were appealed to as lending their sanction to the crusades, and those memorable convulsions, which so materially disturbed the frame-work of society in Europe, were to supply the elements of many a kindred phrensy.

In the year 1211, an army of children amounting to several myriads, and commanded by a child, left Germany in quest of the holy land. At Genoa the sea presented an obstacle which their wisdom appears not to have anticipated, and if thirty thousand of their number returned to Marseilles, it was to be sold to the Saracens, or to perish by hunger and the sword.<sup>24</sup> The first remarkable appearance of this fanatical temper, apart from the object of the crusades, is said to have been in the reign of Philip-Augustus. When the mercenaries of that prince and those of our Henry the second were disbanded, the south of France was selected as the scene of their predatory warfare. To protect the country from the growing outrage of these marauders, one Durand, a carpenter, placed himself at the head of the irritated inhabitants. He is said to have been deluded into this enterprise, by an artifice which had announced him as the favourite of the Virgin; his followers, from the covering they wore, were called brethren of the white caps; and to secure the divine approbation of their object, they bound themselves to appear in unpretending apparel, to abstain from taverns, and to avoid the guilt of swearing, gaming, and perjury. As with the commons in England, the partial success of these redressers of grievances produced a mistaken estimate of their strength, and presuming to oppose the usual exactions of the feudal aristocracy, their influence was soon doomed to disappear.<sup>25</sup> "During the captivity of St. Louis in Egypt," observes Mr. Hallam, "an extensive and terrible ferment broke

<sup>24</sup> Muratori, A. D. 1211. Velly, Hist. iv. 206.

<sup>25</sup> Hallam, iii. 295. Du Cange, v. Capuciati.



“ out in Flanders, and spread from thence over great part of  
“ France. An impostor declared himself commissioned by the  
“ virgin to preach a crusade, not to the rich and noble, who for  
“ their pride had been rejected of God, but to the poor. His  
“ disciples were called Pastoureaux, the simplicity of shepherds  
“ having exposed them more readily to this delusion. In a  
“ short time they were swelled by the confluence of abundant  
“ streams to a moving mass of a hundred thousand men,  
“ divided into companies, with banners bearing a cross and a  
“ lamb, and commanded by the impostor's lieutenants. He  
“ assumed a priestly character, preaching, absolving, annulling  
“ marriages. At Amiens, Bourges, Orleans, and Paris itself,  
“ he was received as a divine prophet. Even the regent  
“ Blanche, for a time, was led away by the popular tide. His  
“ main topic was reproach of the clergy for their idleness and  
“ corruption, a theme well adapted to the ears of the people,  
“ who had long been uttering similar strains of complaint. In  
“ some towns his followers massacred the priests and plundered  
“ the monasteries. The government at length began to exert  
“ itself, and the public sentiment turning against the authors of  
“ so much confusion, this rabble was put to the sword or dis-  
“ sipated. Seventy years afterwards, an insurrection almost  
“ exactly parallel to this burst out under the same pretence of  
“ a crusade. These insurgents, too, bore the name of Pastou-  
“ reaux, and their short career was distinguished by a general  
“ massacre of the Jews.”<sup>26</sup>

But an exhibition of this kind, which extended more generally from the populace to the higher classes, was that of the flagellants. In Italy, toward the middle of the thirteenth century, numbers of these fanatics were seen in the streets and public roads. They usually passed two by two, forming extended processions, and while they inflicted on each other the torture of a leathern scourge, made the air to resound with groans, or hymns of lamentation. This mania, though it failed to obtain the sanction of the church, and was seriously discountenanced by the magistrates, wore so much the appearance of sincerity,

<sup>26</sup> View of the State of Europe, iii. 387, 388.

that it spread through various of the continental states, and was not unknown to this country.<sup>27</sup> The story, also, of the Italian Bianchi, is amply recorded by those who were witnesses of their extravagant singularities; and while referring to a period so late as the opening of the fifteenth century, is fraught with the same proofs of religious derangement, and criminal propensity—demonstrating the folly of regarding the gloom of the popular mind, as affording any permanent security against the most fatal igniting of its passions.<sup>28</sup>

The reader will perceive from these details, that to account for the insurrection of the commons under Wat Tyler, it is by no means necessary that we should be aware of such a mind as that of Wycliffe having existence in this country at the period.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Froissart, ii. 263. Wals. 169.

<sup>28</sup> It would not appear to be correct, as stated by Mr. Hallam, that the sect of the flagellants “soon died away,” (iii. 344.) Mosheim, in his *History of the Fourteenth Century*, (iii. 381, 382) describes them not only as existing, but as become more extravagant than ever in their speculations and their practices. “These flagellants,” he observes, “whose enthusiasm infected every rank, sex, and age, were much worse than the old ones. They not only supposed that God might be prevailed upon to show mercy to those who underwent voluntary punishments, but propagated other tenets highly injurious to religion. They held, among other things, that flagellation was of equal virtue with baptism and the other sacraments; that the forgiveness of all sins was to be obtained by it from God without the merits of Jesus Christ; that the old law of Christ was soon to be abolished, and that a new law, enjoining the baptism of blood, to be administered by whipping, was to be substituted in its place.” It was a century after the exploits of this sect had made much noise in Germany, that they made their appearance in England. In the latter half of the fourteenth

century another sect arose, which, by violent dancing, and other eccentricities, announced themselves the votaries of mirth rather than of sadness. These were pitied by many of the clergy, as possessed with devils, and some instances of successful exorcism are on record for the edification of future times.—*Ibid.* But such extravagances were the legitimate and constant result of the ecclesiastical system which prevailed during the middle ages, and the germ of protestantism, which survived in the midst of them, has been the scape-goat to which catholics impute the guilt of every disorder belonging to that dreary interval.

<sup>29</sup> Froissart, who is minute in his account of the English insurrections, repeatedly asserts that John of Gaunt was the peculiar object of the popular resentment; but he does not, for a moment, hint at any religious motive as having produced any portion of the tumult, unless he may be said to do so in his notice of the declamations of John Ball. His humane opinion, indeed, is, that it all arose from “the too great comfort of the commonalty,” who, at the same time, are described as more oppressed with respect to the services connected with villanage, than any people in Europe.—*Hist. ubi supra.*

Convulsions equally menacing both to the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities of the age, we perceive as the result of causes with which no agency like that of our reformer was connected. And if in attempting the work of reformation, the remedy proved in some instances more afflictive than the disease, this incapacity on the part of the sufferers, must be numbered among the evils introduced by the advocates of lawless authority on the one hand, and those of superstition on the other. Difficult, indeed, would it have been in such an age, to have uttered any generous sentiment with regard to the people, without becoming numbered by their various oppressors with the most revolutionary and dangerous members of the state. That the adversaries of Wycliffe should impute to him a share in the guilt of Tyler's atrocities, is, accordingly, an event in no way mysterious. But if there be certainty in history, it is beyond doubt, that the lessons of inspiration which formed in the rector of Lutterworth so determined a foe of the great antichristian apostacy, were also an authority to which he bowed with sacred submission when describing the legitimate claims of the magistrate, or the just pretensions of the christian pastor.

Even the pages of Walsingham afford a complete vindication of our reformer on this point, as in the opinion of that historian the insurrection arose from the general depravity of the people ; and it is farther stated by him as a part of the confession made by a leader of the rebels, that their meditated destruction of the hierarchy was to make way for the sole establishment of the mendicants. Had Wycliffe's "poor priests," been thus singled out, however unjustly, it is needless to remark the matter of triumph which this would have been to the orthodox ; and from this circumstance, it is equally obvious, that had the wild scheme of the insurgents been realized, the rector of Lutterworth would have been just the last man in the kingdom to have viewed it with pleasure.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> It is affirmed by Froissart, that full two-thirds of the people knew not why they had assembled, and that the plunder of the opulent was shown by their conduct to be the principal mo-

tive to revolt. Hence Mr. Lewis observes that archbishop Parker's remark seems very true, that "it is owing to "pure hatred of the Wycliffites, that "some have falsely and ignorantly pre-

But while the monk of St. Albans saw these disorders as the chastisement of national crime, the members of the commons' house of parliament viewed them as being especially provoked by the burdens which a prodigal court had imposed in the preceding session. In their address to the king, they do not hesitate, after mature deliberation, to affirm, "that unless the administration of the kingdom be speedily reformed, it must become wholly lost. For true it is," they proceed, "that there are such defects in the said administration, as well about the king's person and his household as in his courts of justice, and by grievous oppressions in the country, through maintainers of suits, who are as it were kings in the country, that right and law are come to nothing, and the poor commons are from time to time so pillaged and ruined, partly by the king's purveyors of the household, and others who pay nothing for what they take, partly by the subsidies and tallages raised upon them, and besides by the oppressive behaviour of the king's servants, and other lords, and especially of the foresaid maintainers of suits, they are reduced to greater poverty and discomfort than ever they were before. And moreover, though great sums have been continually granted by, and levied upon them for the defence of the kingdom, yet they are not the better defended against their enemies, but every year are plundered and wasted by sea and land, without any relief. Which calamities the said poor commons, who lately used to live in honour and prosperity, can no longer endure." From this statement of grievances it appears, that in proportion to the largeness of the grants which had been made to the government, had been the diminution of the protection promised; and that while the enemy without was suffered to menace the shores of the kingdom, the host of tyrants harboured within were employed in daily consuming

"tended that John Balle was one of them." Lewis, c. x. 227, 228. Catholic writers have been for some time aware that it is useless to speak of Ball as the disciple of Wycliffe, and they have accordingly agreed to invert the relation; for either will do, inasmuch

as to have been the tutor of Ball was to be the parent of sedition, and to be his follower was to be the mere ape of a demagogue. Ball's disorderly conduct had attracted the notice of his superiors before the year 1366. Wilkins, iii. 64, 152.

the sources of its strength. Having advanced thus far, these sturdy commoners immediately add; "and to speak the real truth, these injuries lately done to the poorer commons, more than they ever suffered before, caused them to rise and to commit the mischief done in the late riot; and there is still cause to fear greater evils, if sufficient remedy be not timely provided against the outrages and oppressions aforesaid."<sup>31</sup> The lords appear to have concurred in these statements; and this testimony, as to the origin of this ill-fated resistance of arbitrary power, is the most decisive that could be supplied.

## NOTE B.

"MANY writers have given us large accounts concerning the sect and name of the Lollards, yet none of them are to be commended for their fidelity, diligence, or accuracy on this head. This I can confidently assert, because I have carefully and expressly inquired into whatever relates to the Lollards; and from the most authentic records concerning them, both published and unpublished, have collected copious materials from whence their true history may be compiled. Most of the German writers, as well as those of other countries, affirm that the Lollards were a particular sect, who differed from the church of Rome in many religious points; and that Walter Lollard, who was burnt in this century at Cologne, was their founder. How so many learned men came to adopt this opinion is beyond my comprehension. They, indeed, refer to Jo. Trithemius as the author of this opinion; yet it is certain that no such account of these people is to be found in his writings. I shall therefore endeavour, with all possible brevity, to throw all the light I can upon this matter, that they who are fond of ecclesiastical history may have a just notion of it.

"The lollhard, or lullhard, or, as the ancient Germans write it, lollert, lullert, is compounded of the old German word

<sup>31</sup> Hallam, iii. 93.

lullen, lollen, lallen, and the well-known termination, hard, with which many of the old High Dutch words end. Lollen, or lullen, signifies to sing with a low voice. See Franc. Junii *Etymologicum Anglicanum*, ab Edvardo Lye, Oxon. 1743, fol. under the word lollard. The word is also used in the same sense among the Flemings, Swedes, and other nations, as appears by their respective dictionaries. Among the Germans, both the sense and pronunciation of it have undergone some alteration; for they say, lallen, which signifies to pronounce indistinctly, or stammer. Lollhard, therefore, is a singer, or one who frequently sings. For as the word beggen, which universally signifies to request any thing fervently, is applied to devotional requests or prayers; and, in the stricter sense in which it is used by the High Dutch, denotes praying fervently, to God; in the same manner the word lollen, or lullen, is transferred from a common to a sacred song, and signifies, in its most limited sense, to sing a hymn. Lollhard, therefore, in the vulgar tongue of the ancient Germans, denotes a person who is continually praising God with a song, or singing hymns to his honour. Hoscemius, a canon of Liege, has well apprehended and expressed the force of this word in his *Gesta Pontificum Iungrensium et Leodiensium*, tom. iii. p. 350. s. In the year (1309) says he, certain strolling hypocrites, who were called Lollards, or praisers of God, deceived some women of quality in Hainault and Brabant. Because those who praised God, generally did it in verse, therefore in the Latin style of the middle age, to praise God, meant to sing to him, and such as were frequently employed in acts of adoration, were called religious singers. And as prayers and hymns are regarded as a certain external sign of piety towards God, therefore those who aspired after a more than ordinary degree of piety and religion, and for that purpose were more frequently occupied in singing hymns of praise to God than others, were, in the common popular language, called Lollhards. Hereupon this word acquired the same meaning with that of the term beghard, which denoted a person remarkable for piety; for in all the old records, from the eleventh century, these two words are synonymous: so that all who are styled

Beggards are also called Lollards, which may be proved to a demonstration from many authors, and particularly from many passages in the writings of Felix Malleolus against the Beggards; so that there are precisely as many sorts of Beggards as of Lollards. Those whom the monks now call lay-brothers, were formerly called Lollard brethren, as is well observed by Barthol. Scholinger, *Ad Joach. Vadiadem de Collegiis Monasteriisque Germaniæ Veter. lib. i. p. 24*, in *Goldasti Scriptor. Rerum Alemannicarum*, tom. iii.

“ The brethren of the Free Spirit, of whom we have already given a large account, are by some styled Beggards, by others, Lollards. The followers of Gerhard Groote, or priests of the community, are frequently called Lollard brethren. The good man Walter, who was burnt at Cologne, and whom so many learned men have unadvisedly represented as the founder of the sect of the Lollards, is by some called a Beggard, by others a Lollard, and by others a Minorite. The Franciscan Tertiaries, who were remarkable for their prayers and other pious exercises, often go by the name of Lollards. The Cellite brethren, or Alexians, whose piety was very exemplary, did no sooner appear in Flanders, about the beginning of this century, than the people gave them the title of Lollards, a term much in use at that time. A particular reason, indeed, for their being distinguished by this name was, that they were public singers, who made it their business to inter the bodies of those who died of the plague, and sung a dirge over them in a mournful and indistinct tone as they carried them to the grave. Among the many testimonies that might be alleged to prove this, we shall confine ourselves to the words of Jo. Bapt. Gramage, a man eminently skilled in the history of his country, in his work, entitled *Antwerpia*, lib. ii. cap. vi. p. 16. ‘ The Alexians,’ says he, ‘ who constantly employed themselves about funerals, ‘ had their rise at Antwerp; at which place, about the year ‘ 1300, some honest pious laymen formed a society. On ‘ account of their extraordinary temperance and modesty, they ‘ were styled Matemani (or moderatists), and also Lollards, ‘ from their attendance on funeral obsequies. From their cells, ‘ they were named Cellite brethren.’ To the same purpose is



the following passage in his work entitled *Lovanium*, p. 18, which is inserted in the splendid folio edition of *Belgic Antiquities*, published at Louvain, in 1708: ‘The Alexians, who were wholly engaged in taking care of funerals, now began to appear. They were laymen, who, having wholly devoted themselves to works of mercy, were named Lollards and Mantemanni (or moderatists). They made it their sole business to take care of all such as were sick, or out of their senses. These they attended both privately and publicly, and buried the dead.’ The same learned author tells us, that he transcribed some of these particulars from an old diary, written in Flemish rhyme. Hence we find in the annals of Holland and Utrecht, in *Ant. Matthæi Analect. Vet. Ævi*, tom. i. p. 431, the following words: ‘Die Lollardtyes die brochten, dee dooden by een, *i. e.* the Lollards who collected the dead bodies;’ which passage is thus paraphrased by Matthæus: ‘The managers of funerals, and carriers of the dead, of whom there was a fixed company, were a set of mean, worthless creatures, who usually spoke in a canting mournful tone, as if bewailing the dead; and hence it came to pass, that a street in Utrecht, in which most of these people lived, was called the Loller street.’ The same reason that changed the word beggard from its primitive meaning contributed also to give, in process of time, a different signification to that of lollard, even its being assumed by persons that dishonoured it. For among those Lollards, who made such extraordinary pretences to piety and religion, and spent the greatest part of their time in meditation, prayer, and such-like acts of piety, there were many abominable hypocrites, who entertained the most ridiculous opinions, and concealed the most enormous vices under the specious mask of this extraordinary profession. But it was chiefly after the rise of the Alexians or Cellites, that the name Lollard became infamous. For the priests and monks being inveterately exasperated against these good men, propagated injurious suspicions of them, and endeavoured to persuade the people that innocent and beneficent as the Lollards seemed to be, they were in reality the contrary, being tainted with the most pernicious sentiments of a religious kind, and

secretly addicted to all sorts of vices. Thus by degrees it came to pass, that any person who covered heresies or crimes under the appearance of piety, was called a Lollard. So that it is certain this was not a name to denote any one particular sect, but was formerly common to all persons and all sects who were supposed to be guilty of impiety towards God and the church, under an external profession of extraordinary piety."—Mosheim. iii. 355—358.

## NOTE C.

GERMANY, from the period in which it owned the authority of its apostle, St. Boniface, had frequently proved an asylum to the fugitive Vaudois. When the penalty of exile was imposed on Peter Waldo and his followers, the states to which our countryman had been the first to announce the tidings of the gospel, became the residence of the greater number, and long continued to be the principal scene of their labours. At the commencement of the thirteenth century, they were sufficiently numerous to provoke a formidable persecution from the emperor, Frederic the second; and the report of their sufferings which reached this country, was recorded by Matthew Paris. To the violence of the sword that of the inquisitor succeeded. Conrad, who received his authority as chief inspector from the pontiff, exercised his office with the utmost cruelty, nor was there any thing either in civil rank or ecclesiastical distinction to protect from his intolerance. He is said to have resorted to the ordeal of fire, affirming that the accused who suffered from holding the heated iron, were thus shown to be worthy of passing through the fires of this world, to those of the next. The diocese of Treves, appears to have been particularly distinguished as the residence of the suffering Waldenses. In that district, schools were established for the instruction of their youth. These sectaries are described as publishing aloud their dissent from the hierarchy, and their censures of the pope as Antichrist; as declaring the prelates to be simonists and deceivers of the people; and as asserting, that they were themselves the only preachers of truth, and that rather than the

truth should fail of advocates by an extinction of their race, God would not fail to raise up children to himself of the stones in the street. This fearless conduct may have arisen from the weakness or the forbearance of the local authorities; or from the more zealous temper of the Vaudois pastors in the neighbourhood of Treves; it is certain that their contest with the established superstitions was of the most uncompromising character. Other teachers might bury the truth, and raise falsehood to its place; it was theirs to proclaim the christian doctrine free from the traditions of men, and instead of a feigned remission of sin, invented by the pope, to offer one that is certain and final, being from God himself. It is fully ascertained that the people avowing these sentiments existed in 1330, which was six years subsequent to the birth of Wycliffe, and in 1391, which was seven years after his decease. It was near the former period that an event took place, which served greatly to exasperate the clergy, but which suggests the most favourable conclusions as to the character of the persecuted. Echard, a monk, and a person who had acted with much severity as an inquisitor, had often felt himself unable to confute the reasonings with which such as were accused of heresy defended their separation from the church of Rome; and after an interval, the impressions thus made on a mind apparently the most unpromising, issued in conversion. The monk not only professed to renounce his former opinions, but became the friend and companion of the men whom he had regarded as the worst enemies of piety, and had laboured to destroy. It will be supposed that Echard became an object of peculiar enmity with his former associates. After a diligent search, they succeeded in securing his person. At Heidelberg, he was sentenced to the flames; but his last moments were employed in denouncing the injustice which doomed so many good men to perish for maintaining the truth of God as opposed to the devices of Antichrist.<sup>1</sup>

In the beginning of the thirteenth century, the fires of persecution were kindled in Paris, where a number of Waldenses

<sup>1</sup> Perrin. Hist. ii. c. ix. Matthew Paris, ann. 1220.

was imprisoned, and many condemned to the stake. Somewhat later, the zeal of orthodoxy was extended, after the same manner, from the capital to the provinces: and twenty years previous to the birth of Wycliffe, a hundred and fourteen persons were apprehended by the Parisians as of Waldensian origin, and they are described as perishing in the flames with the constancy of martyrs. In the year 1378,—which will be remembered as that in which the English reformer was engaged in his contest with the papal delegates,—the clergy of Paris again appealed to that destructive element, on which, in common with their brethren in other states, they were so much disposed to rely as their best argument against heresy.<sup>2</sup> How far their flocks were edified by such spectacles, we are not informed; but under Philip the fair, the fugitive sectaries were followed into Flanders, where the atrocities of one Robert Bougre, who, from being a professed Vaudois, became an inquisitor, were such as at length to excite the alarm of his colleagues. Measures were secretly adopted to deprive him of his power, and, convicted of many crimes, he was called to end his career of treachery, depredation, and bloodshed, in a prison. It should be remarked, also, that it was in Flanders, where commerce was diffusing its equalities, and its various benefits, that the adherents of the protestant doctrine were so few, and so hunted down by their oppressors, and exiled from the abodes of men, as to obtain the name of Turlupins, or the companions of the wolf.<sup>3</sup>

“About the year of our Lord 1370,” observes the Vaudois historian, “the Waldenses of the valley of Pragela and Dauphine grew to so great a number in so small a country, that they were obliged to send away a certain portion of their younger people to seek some other place to inhabit. In their travel, they found in Calabria certain waste lands, but ill peopled, and yet very fertile, as they might well judge by those parts near adjoining. Finding the country fit to bring forth corn, wine, oil of olives, and chestnuts, and that there

<sup>2</sup> Perrin, *Hist.* ii. c. xv.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* *Hist.* ii. c. xiii. Matthew Paris, ann. 1220.

“ were hills fit for the breeding and nourishing of cattle, and  
“ also to furnish them with fuel, and with timber fit for build-  
“ ing—they came unto the lords of the neighbourhood, to treat  
“ with them touching their abode in those districts. The said  
“ lords received them kindly, and agreed to their laws and  
“ requests, as to their rents, tenths, tolls, and penalties in case  
“ there fell out any differences between them. And so, having  
“ certain quarters or parts of the country thus assigned to them,  
“ many of them returned to advertise their parents of the good  
“ adventure that had happened unto them, in a rich country  
“ likely to abound in all temporal benedictions. Returning,  
“ they brought back with them from their parents and friends,  
“ whatever it pleased them to bestow upon them, and many of  
“ them married, and brought their wives into Calabria, where  
“ they built certain small towns and cities, to which their own  
“ houses were as walls, as namely, St. Xist, La Garde, La Vica-  
“ ricis, les Rousses, Argentier, St. Vincent's, and Montolieu.  
“ The lords of the said countries thought themselves happy in  
“ that they had met with so good subjects, who had peopled  
“ lands, and made them to abound with all manner of fruits;  
“ but principally because they found them to be honest men,  
“ and of a good conscience, yielding unto them all those duties  
“ that they could expect from the best of subjects. Only their  
“ pastors and priests complained that these people lived not in  
“ the matter of religion as others did. They made none of  
“ their children priests or nuns, they were not fond of chanting,  
“ of tapers, of lamps, of bells, no, nor of masses for their dead.  
“ They had built certain temples, but had not adorned them  
“ with images; and they went not on pilgrimage; they caused  
“ their children also to be instructed by certain strange and  
“ unknown schoolmasters, to whom they yield a great deal  
“ more honour than to themselves, paying nothing to them,  
“ except their tythes, according to the agreement with their  
“ lords. They doubted, therefore, that the said people had  
“ imbibed some particular belief, which hindered them from  
“ mingling themselves and joining in alliance with the home-born  
“ people of the land, and that they had no good opinion of the  
“ church of Rome. The lords of those places beginning to fear

“ that if the pope should take notice, that so near his seat, there  
 “ was a kind of people who contemned the laws of the Romish  
 “ church, they might chance to lose them, detained their priests  
 “ from complaining of these people, who in every thing else had  
 “ shown themselves to be honest men, and who had enriched  
 “ the whole country, even the priests themselves. Thus were  
 “ they maintained by their lords against all envy ; and that, not-  
 “ withstanding the priests, until the year 1560, at which time  
 “ they could no longer defend them against the pope’s thunder-  
 “ bolts.”<sup>4</sup>

My apology for inserting this extended extract will be found in its characteristic simplicity, and in the fact that it contains nearly all that is known respecting a numerous and interesting people through an interval of nearly two centuries. Ten years had scarcely passed, since this emigration from the valley of Pragela and Dauphine, when the Waldenses of those districts, and such as were scattered through Ambrun, Vienna, Geneva, Savoy, and Avignon, with their neighbouring provinces, were assailed by persecution. Clement, the anti-pope, whose contest with Urban the sixth had proved so favourable to the cause of the reformed opinions as promulgated by Wycliffe, had fixed his residence at Avignon ; and in the year 1380, he empowered the mendicant, Francis Borelli, to make inquisition for heresy through the French territories, and those of the allies of France. The prelates within those limits,—for there alone was the authority of Clement admitted,—were required to aid the zeal of the friar, that no diocese might be found a resting place to the proscribed Waldensian. Borelli opened his commission at Ambrun, by calling upon the inhabitants of Erassiniere, of Argentier, and of the valley Pute, to appear before him, under pain of excommunicaton. The summons was disregarded, and “ the last, and most direful excommunication of offenders,” was pronounced. From the year 1380, to the year 1393, the mendicant continued to exercise his authority with the same pitiless severity. The goods of such as were convicted, were divided ; two-thirds to the clergy, and one to the magistrate ; and all

<sup>4</sup> Perrin, Hist. c. v.

persons, as they would avoid the penalties denounced against the favourers of heretics, were forbidden to hold the remotest intercourse with them, or to perform, in their behalf, the humblest service of humanity. The heretic, himself, if a priest, was deprived of his benefice and of his office; if a layman, his will became invalid, his inheritance lost, and along with it every virtue which the sacraments were supposed to convey, together with the rights of sepulture. Nor were these attempts to crush the race which had so long protested against the corruptions of the mystical Babylon, without some appearance of success. In the valley Pute alone, the names of a hundred and fifty men were preserved as those of persons who had fallen into the hands of the emissaries of Clement, and who had sealed their faith with their blood; not to mention "divers women, with many of their sons and daughters, well stricken in years."<sup>5</sup>

#### NOTE D.

It was not until towards the close of the ninth century, that the Bohemians began to renounce idolatry; and, to adopt the language of the historians of their sufferings, when they "received the first light of the gospel, the cross was the concomitant of it, according to the will of Christ, who, as he did establish the church by his own blood, so he sprinkled it with the blood of martyrs, that it might be fruitful. This is the council of divine wisdom, that we may hope in Christ, and not for the things of this life; therefore the gospel cost the Bohemians some of their blood."<sup>1</sup> This test of christian sincerity arose, in the first instance, from the resentment of a portion of

<sup>5</sup> Perrin, Hist c. iii.

<sup>1</sup> The following is the title of the book from which the materials of the above sketch are selected. "The History of the Bohemian Persecution, from the beginning of their Conversion to Christianity in the year 894 to the year 1632, Ferdinand the Second, of Austria, reigning." The epistle "To the Godly Reader," is thus

subscribed, "In our banishment in the year 1632, N. N. N. &c." The facts of the story related, were designed to improve an edition of the Acts and Monuments, and the Bohemian pastors state, that they were collected from their own writers, or supplied from observation. The work was separately printed in this country in 1650.



their rulers who still adhered to the ancient superstitions ; and afterwards, from the obtrusive domination of the pontiffs. Nearly a century had passed since the introduction of the gospel into that kingdom, when an effort was made to retain the use of the popular language in the offices of the church, and it was made successfully. But the privilege which one pope had conceded in 977, was prohibited in the most imperative terms by another in 1179. So late, however, as the year 1197, an advocate of clerical celibacy among the Bohemians had nearly forfeited his life by his temerity in publicly abetting that innovation ; nor was it until the middle of the fourteenth century that communion in one kind became at all the practice of that people. Three of their reformers were contemporary with Wycliffe, and their names and opinions may be regarded as familiar to Anne of Bohemia.

Melice, the first of these, was a native of Prague, and of noble family. His powers as a preacher secured him a large auditory, and he, ere long, proceeded "to exhort the people "unto a frequent communion in both kinds ; to complain much "of spiritual desolation ; to rebuke divers abuses and abominations, being much helped with the godly endeavours of his "faithful colleague, Conrad Strickna, a man eminent for "learning and eloquence." By their joint labours considerable reformation is said to have been effected in the morals of the city. But Melice felt himself powerfully urged to visit Rome, and to lift up his voice of reproof, as in the presence of the power which had so desolated the church of God. With prayers, and tears, and fastings, he waited to ascertain, if possible, the real source of this propelling influence which he found it so difficult to resist ; and journeying at length to the seat of Antichrist, he placarded the most obnoxious of his opinions on the houses of the principal ecclesiastics, and avowed them publicly. He was, of course, speedily apprehended, committed to prison, and condemned as a heretic. In 1366, however, his enemies are said to have consulted their personal safety, by releasing him ; and his decease, in 1374, was "five years after "the happy dissolution of his colleague Strickna."

The same cause, it appears, was afterwards sustained, and

with still more efficiency, by Matthias Janovius, who was also a native of Prague, but, according to the historians before cited, he was generally called the Parisian, from his having passed nine years as a student in the university of Paris. The same writers state, that “ he was confessor to Charles the fourth, and “ more fervent and zealous than his predecessors in defending “ communion in both kinds. He wrote many things, as, *Of the “ Life of a Christian, Of Hypocrisy, Of Antichrist, Of the “ Frequent Receiving of the Sacrament of the Body and the “ Blood of Christ.* Histories tell us, that this Parisian, together with some other learned men, went to Charles, when “ promoted unto kingly dignity, and requested him to call “ an œcumenical council for the church’s reformation. But the “ king returned unto them this answer ; that it was not in his “ power, but that it belonged unto the ghostly father, the pope “ of Rome ; and that, therefore, he would write in their behalf, “ and entreat a council for them ; which, after he had done, the “ pope was provoked, and did so importune him for the punishment of those rash and heretical men, that Charles, being “ maddened with the authority of the pope, although he loved “ this Parisian much, commanded him to depart his kingdom ; “ and though indeed he returned afterwards, yet led he the “ remainder of his life in private, dying in the year 1394, “ November 30th. Now Janovius being banished, the adversaries forbade and abolished communion in both kinds, not “ only in the church of Aix, but everywhere in Prague, and “ through the whole kingdom. So that the most constant “ among them could not celebrate and receive the sacrament “ after their accustomed manner, excepting in private houses, “ and after that in woods and caves, and there not without “ hazard of their lives and much persecution. For they were “ set upon in the ways ; plundered, beaten, and drowned in “ rivers ; so that at length they were necessitated to go together armed, and in strong companies, which from that time “ continued until the days of Huss. Letters patent, also, were “ extorted from Charles,—though Hajecius saith they were “ sent to the prelates of his own accord,—wherein an inquisition is ordained, and punishment by fire determined to be

“ inflicted upon those who depart from the faith and ceremonies of the church of Rome. It is extant in Hajecius, and was proclaimed on the 18th of September, in the year 1376, of which this was the chief effect; that diligent care was afterwards had that none but the pope’s creatures might be admitted into the places of magistracy and public offices, who might serve as a bridle to restrain the commonalty. We find it also recorded, that this Parisian, finding his death approaching, gave this comfort among others to his friends: ‘The rage of the enemies of truth hath now prevailed against us, but this shall not be always, for an ignoble people shall arise without sword or power, over whom they shall not be able to prevail.’ ”

Such was the religious character of the Bohemians, a people with whom the queen of England had been principally connected previous to her appearance in this island as the consort of Richard. It is not altogether a mystery, therefore, that her views of religion should have been somewhat more enlightened than those generally adopted by persons of her rank,—or indeed by persons of any rank in that age. Her attendants, during her twelve years’ residence in this country, were natives of Bohemia; and persons, it appears, who participated in her religious feelings. The mind of Wycliffe was one with which the devout Bohemian could readily have sympathized; and it is certain that on the death of the queen, her attendants conveyed many of the writings of the English reformer to their home,<sup>2</sup> where they served to prepare the oppressed for the struggle which ensued under Jerome and Huss, the illustrious successors of Melice, Strickna, and Janovius.

<sup>2</sup> Turner, Hist. v. 198. Hist. Bohem. *Æneas Silvius*, c. xxxv. 66.

## APPENDIX.

### No. I.

GEN. i. In the bigynnyng God made of nought hevene and erthe, forsothe the erthe was idil and voyde, and derknessis weren on the face of deppe; and the Spiryte of the Lord was borne on the watre. And God sayde, light be maad, and light was maad. And God saw the light that it was good, and he departide the light fro derknessis, and he clepide the light day, and the derknessis nyght; and the eventide, and morntide was maad one day. And God seyde, the firmament be maad in the myddis of watre, and departe watre fro watre: and God made the firmament, and departed the watre that weren undir the firmament, fro those watre that weren on the firmament, and it was doon so, and God clepide the firmament hevene, and the eventide and the morntide was maad the secunde day.

Gen. xlv. Joseph myghte not lengur abstayne him self, while manye men stoden bifore. Wherefore he comandide, that alle men shulden go out and that noon alyen were present in the knowing of Joseph and hise britheren. And Joseph reyside the vois with weping, which Egyptians herden, and al the hows of Farao. And he seyde to hise britheren, I am Joseph, lyveth my fadir yet? The britheren myghten not answeere, and weren a gast by ful mych drede; to whiche he seyde mekely, neighe ye to me, and whanne they hadden neighe nigh, he seyde, I am Joseph youre brothir whom ye seelden in to Egypt, nyle ye drede, nether seme it to be hard to you that ye seelden me into these cuntreys, for God hath sent me bifore you in to Egypt for youre heelte, for it is twey yeer that hungur bigan to be in the londe, yet fyve yeer suen in which men shall not mowe erthe, nether repe, and God bifore sente me, that ye be reserved in erthe and mown have metis to lyve. I was sent hidur, not by youre counsel, but by Goddis wille.—MS. Bib. Reg.

## No. II.\*

*Conclusiones J. Wiclefi de Sacramento Altaris.*MS. in Hyp.  
Bodl. 163.

1. HOSTIA consecrata quam videmus in Altari nec est Christus nec aliqua sui pars, sed efficax ejus signum.

2. Nullus viator sufficit oculo corporali, sed fide Christum videre in hostia consecrata.

3. Olim fuit fides Ecclesie Romane in professione Berengarii quod panis et vinum que remanent post benedictionem sunt hostia consecrata.

4. Eukaristia habet virtute verborum sacramentalium tam corpus quam sanguinem Christi vere et realiter ad <sup>a</sup>quemlibet ejus punctum.

<sup>a</sup> Sic MS.

5. Transubstantiatio, ydemptificatio et impanatio quibus utuntur baptiste signorum in materia de eukaristia non sunt fundabiles in Scriptura.

6. Repugnat Sanctorum sententiis asserere quod sit accidens sine subjecto in hostia veritatis.

7. Sacramentum Eukaristie est in natura sua panis aut vinum, habens virtute verborum sacramentalium verum corpus et sanguinem Christi ad quemlibet ejus punctum.

8. Sacramentum Eukaristie est in figura corpus Christi et sanguis, in que transubstantiatur panis aut vinum cujus remanet post consecracionem aliquitas licet quoad consideracionem fidelium sit sopita.

9. Quod accidens sit sine subjecto non est fundabile, sed si sic Deus adnichilatur et perit quilibet articulus fidei Christiane.

10. Quecunque persona vel secta est nimis heretica que pertinaciter defenderit quod Sacramentum Altaris est panis per se existens in natura infinitum abjectior et imperfectior pane equino.

11. Quicumque pertinaciter defendet quod dictum Sacramentum sit accidens, qualitas, quantitas aut earum aggregatio incidit in heresim supradictam.

12. Panis triticeus in quo solum licet conficere, est in natura infinitum perfectior pane fabino vel ratonis, quorum uterque in natura est perfectior accidente.

## No. III.

*Diffinitio facta par Cancellarium et Doctores Universitatis Oxonii, de Sacramento Altaris contra Opinioncs Wycliffianas : 627. Ex alia Sententia Willielmi Cancellarii Oxon. contra M. J. Wycliff residentem in Cathedra.*

Spelman.  
vol. ii. p.  
627. Ex  
MS. Hyp.  
Bodl. 163.

WILLIELMUS de <sup>a</sup>Barton Cancellarius Universitatis Oxon. Omnibus <sup>a</sup>Berton. dicte Universitatis filiis ad quos presens nostrum mandatum pervenerit, salutem, et mandatis nostris firmiter obedire. Ad nostrum non sine

\* Several of the papers in this and the preceding Appendix have been printed from Mr. Lewis's Collection,

and it will be seen, that I have generally retained his emendations.

<sup>b</sup> omnes. grandi displicentia pervenit auditum, quod cum <sup>b</sup> omnium heresium  
<sup>c</sup> perniciosi inventores, defensores, seu fautores, cum eorum <sup>c</sup> perniciosi dogmatibus  
sint per sacros Canones sententia majoris Excommunicationis damna-  
biliter involuti, et sic a cunctis Catholicis rationabiliter evitandi: Non-  
nulli tamen maligni spiritus repleti concilio in insaniam mentis producti,  
<sup>d</sup> similiter. molientes tunicam Domini <sup>d</sup> scilicet Sancte Ecclesie scindere unitatem,  
quasdam hereses olim ab Ecclesia solenniter condemnatas: Hiis diebus,  
proh dolor! innovant, et tam in ista Universitate ista quam extra publice  
dogmatizant; duo inter alia sua documenta pestifera asserentes, primo,  
in Sacramento Altaris substantiam panis materialis et vini, quæ prius  
fuerunt ante consecrationem, post consecrationem realiter remanere.  
Secundo, quod execrabilis est auditu, in illo venerabili Sacramento non  
esse corpus Christi et sanguinem essentialiter, nec substantialiter, nec  
etiam corporaliter, sed figurative, seu tropice, sic quod Christus non est  
<sup>e</sup> presentia. ibi veraciter in sua propria <sup>e</sup> persona corporali. Ex quibus documentis  
fides catholica periclitatur, devotio populi minoratur, et hec Universitas  
mater nostra non mediocriter diffamatur. Nos igitur advertentes quod  
<sup>f</sup> partus. assertiones hujusmodi <sup>f</sup> per <sup>f</sup> tempus se deteriores haberent si dincius in  
hac Universitate sic conniventibus oculis tolerentur, convocavimus plures  
sacræ Theologiæ Doctores et Juris Canonici Professores quos periciores  
credidimus, et premissis assertionibus in eorum presentia patenter expo-  
sitis ac diligenter discussis, tandem finaliter est compertum, et eorum  
<sup>g</sup> judicio. <sup>g</sup> judiciis declaratum ipsas esse <sup>h</sup> errores atque determinationibus Ecclesiæ  
<sup>h</sup> erroneas. repugnantes, contradictoriasque earundem esse veritates Catholicas, et  
ex dictis sanctorum, et determinationibus Ecclesie manifeste sequentes;  
videlicet quod per verba Sacramentalia a sacerdote rite prolata panis et  
vinum in Altari in verum corpus Christi et sanguinem transsubstantiantur  
sen substantialiter convertuntur, sic quod post consecrationem non reman-  
nent in illo venerabili Sacramento, panis materialis et vinum que prius  
<sup>i</sup> secundum. secundum suas substantias seu naturas, sed <sup>i</sup> solum species eorundem,  
sub quibus speciebus verum corpus Christi et sanguis realiter continentur,  
non solum figurative seu tropice, sed essentialiter, substantialiter ac cor-  
poraliter, sic quod Christus est ibi veraciter in sua propria presencia  
corporali, hoc credendum, hoc docendum, hoc contra omnes contradi-  
centes viriliter defendendum. Hortamur igitur in Domino, et auctoritate  
nostra monemus primo, secundo et tertio, ac districtius inhibemus, pro  
prima monicione assignando unum diem; pro secunda alium diem; et pro  
tertia monicione Canonica ac peremptoria unum alium diem, ne quis de  
cetero cujuscunque gradus, status aut conditionis existat, premissas  
duas assertiones erroneas aut earum alteram, in scholis <sup>l</sup> vel extra scholas  
<sup>l</sup> aut. in hac Universitate publice teneat, doceat <sup>m</sup> aut defendat sub pena  
<sup>m</sup> seu incarcerationis, et suspensionis ab omni actu scolastico, ac etiam sub  
pena excommunicationis majoris quam in omnes et singulos in hac parte  
rebelles et nostris monicionibus non parentes, lapsis ipsis tribus diebus  
pro monicione canonica assignatis, mora, culpa et offensa precedentibus,  
et id fieri merito exigentibus ferimus in his scriptis, quorum omnium abso-  
luciones, et absolventi potestatem, preterquam in mortis articulo, nobis  
et successoribus nostris specialiter reservamus.

Insuper ut homines quamvis non propter timorem late sententie

ⁿ propter defectum audiencie a talibus doctrinis illicitis retrahantur, et ⁿ adde sal-  
eorum opiniones erronee sopiantur, eadem auctoritate qua prius mone-  
mus primo, secundo, ° tertio, ac districcius inhibemus, ne quis de cetero ° add. et.  
aliquem publice docentem, tenentem, seu defendentem premissas duas  
asserciones erroneas aut earum alteram in scholis vel extra scholas in hac  
Universitate quovismodo audiat vel auscultet, sed statim sic docentem  
tanquam serpentem venenum pestiferum emittentem fugiat et abscedat,  
sub pena excommunicationis majoris, et omnes et singulos contrave-  
nientes non immerito fulminande et sub penis aliis superius anno-  
tatis.

Nomina <sup>p</sup> Doctorum qui presenti decreto specialiter affuerunt, et <sup>p</sup> insere au-  
eidem unanimiter consenserunt sunt hec. tem.

Magister Johannes Lawndreyn sacre pagine professor et secularis.

Magister Henricus <sup>q</sup> Cronpe Abbas Monachus.

<sup>q</sup> Gromp.

Magister Johannes Chessham de ordine predicatorum.

Magister Willielmus <sup>r</sup> Bruscombe de eodem ordine.

<sup>r</sup> Brus-  
tounge.

Magister Johannes Schypton de ordine Augustinorum.

Magister Johannes Tyssington de ordine Minorum.

Magister Johannes Loveye de ordine Carmelitarum.

Magister Johannes <sup>s</sup> Wellys Monachus de Ramesey.

<sup>s</sup> Welles.

Magister Johannes Wolverton de ordine predicatorum.

Magister Robertus <sup>t</sup> Rugge S. pagine professor et secularis.

<sup>t</sup> Rigge.

Magister Joannes Moubray Doctor in utroque Jure.

Magister Joannes Gascoynge Doctor in Decretis.

Convocatis igitur prefatis Doctoribus <sup>u</sup> in eorum domum et plena deli-  
beratione habita de premissis, ex omnium nostrum unanimi concilio et <sup>u</sup> ut est dic-  
assensu, presens mandatum emanare decrevimus. In quorum omnium tum.  
singulorum testimonium, sigillum officii <sup>x</sup> fecimus hiis opponi.

<sup>x</sup> ins. nostri.

#### No. IV.

*Litera quam misit Archiepiscopus [Willielmus Courtney] Cancel- MS. in Hyp.  
lario Oxon. ut assisteret Fratri Petro Stokys in Publicatione Bodl. 163.  
ejusdem Commissionis sub hac Forma. fol. 67. b.*

IN Christo fili, Miramur non modicum et turbamur quod cum ille  
Magister Nicholans Herförde super prædicationibus et doctrina hereti-  
carum et erronearum <sup>a</sup> concionum notorie reddatur suspectus, sicut nos <sup>a</sup> Sic MS.  
vobis alias retulisse meminimus, extunc vos sibi adeo <sup>b</sup> favorabilem exhi- pro conclu-  
buistis ut excellenciorum et digniorem <sup>c</sup> animi sermonem in Universitate sionum.  
vestra vobis et Cancellario qui pro tempore fuerit deputatum, ut nostris, <sup>b</sup> Sic MS.  
assignaretis eidem Nicolao absque difficultate qualibet inibi prædi- <sup>c</sup> Sic MS.  
candum. Vobis ergo consulimus et hortamur in visceribus Jesu Christi for pro anni.  
quod talibus nullum de cetero præsumatis impartiri favorem, ne ipsorum  
secta et numero unus esse videamini, et exinde contra vos officii vestri  
debitum nos oporteat exercere. Quia adversus hujusmodi præsump- <sup>d</sup> Sic MS.  
torum audaciam Dominus noster Rex et proceres regni in processus pro nestris  
nostri subsidium nobis et suffraganeis <sup>d</sup> vestris sic <sup>d</sup> premiserunt assistere, et promiserunt.



\* Sic MS.  
pro disca-  
mini.  
† Sic MS.  
pro conclu-  
siones.

quod per *Dei* gratiam diucius non regnabunt. Et ut talium præsump-  
torum consortia et opiniones erroneas abhorrere \* dicamini dilecto filio  
meo fratri Petro Stokys sacrae paginae professori ordinis Carmelitarum  
in publicatione literarumstrarum, sibi contra † conciones huiusmodi  
directarum pro defensione catholicae fidei viriliter adhærere curetis, et  
litteras illas in scholis theologicis Universitatis praedictae per Bedellum  
illius facultatis in proxima lectura inibi facienda absque diminutione  
quacunque faciatis effectualiter publicari, nobis illico rescribentes quid  
feceritis in hac parte. Scriptum in manerio nostro de Ottesforde penul-  
timo die Maii. Semper in Christo valete.

## No. VI.

### *Confessio Magistri Johannis Wycllyff.*

SEPE confessus sum et adhuc confiteor quod idem corpus Christi in  
numero, quod fuit assumptum de Virgine, quod passum est in cruce,  
quod pro sancto tidno jacuit in sepulchro, quod tertia die resurrexit,  
quod post 40 dies ascendit in cœlum, et quod sedet perpetuo ad dextram  
Dei Patris; ipsum, inquam, idem corpus et eadem substantia est vere  
et realiter panis sacramentalis vel hostia consecrata quam fideles sen-  
ciunt in manibus sacerdotis, cujus probacio est quia Christus qui mentiri  
non potest sic asserit. Non tamen audeo dicere quod corpus Christi sit  
essentialiter, substantialiter, corporaliter vel ydemptice ille panis sicut  
corpus Christi extensum est ille panis: Sed ipsum corpus non est extense  
vel dimensionaliter ille panis. Credimus enim quod triplex est modus  
essendi corpus Christi in hostia consecrata scilicet, virtualis, spiritualis,  
et sacramentalis. Virtualis quo benefacit per totum suum dominum, se-  
cundum bona nature vel gratie. Modus autem essendi spiritualis est quo  
corpus Christi est in Eucharistia et Sanctis per gratiam. Et tercius est  
modus essendi sacramentalis quo corpus Christi singulariter in hostia con-  
secrata, et sicut secundus modus perexigit primum; ita tercius modus  
secundum perexigit quia impossibile est prescitum carentem fide se-  
cundum iusticiam presentem conficere. Qui ergo credit sive conficiat  
sive non conficiat manducavit, ut dicit Beatus Augustinus super Joan-  
nem Omelia 25. Et iste modus essendi spiritualis est verior in anima.  
Est etiam verior et realior quam prior modus essendi, vel secundum  
membrum secundi modi essendi in hostia consecrata, cum sit per se  
causa illius modi vel efficiens vel finalis, et per se causa est magis verius  
Ens suo causato. Modus autem essendi quo corpus Christi est in hostia  
est modus verus et realis, cum autorum numerus qui mentiri non potest  
dixit, hoc est corpus meum, et reliquit suis sacerdotibus virtutem simi-  
liter faciendi. Hoc autem totum ex fide scripturae colligitur. Ideo  
Christus est specialiori modo in isto Sacramento quam in aliis. Cum sit  
simul veritas et figura, non est autem sic secundum alia sacramenta,  
patet iste miraculosus modus essendi sacramentalis. Cultores autem  
signorum nesciunt fundare quod in suo sacramento est realiter corpus

Christi. Sed præter istos tres modos essendi sunt alii tres modi realiores et veriores quos corpus Christi appropriate habet in cælo sc. modus essendi substantialiter, corporaliter et dimensionaliter. Et groose concipientes non intelligunt alium modum essendi naturalis substantiæ præter illos. Illi autem sunt valde indispoti ad concipiendum archana Eucharisticæ, et subtilitatem scripturæ. Ideo dico illis quod duo modi priores in substantia corporali coincidunt, non quod esse substantialiter consequitur corpus Christi secundum rationem qua corpus Christi. Modus autem essendi dimensionaliter consequitur ad duos priores, sicut passio ad subjectum. Et quilibet istorum trium modorum erit realior et causa prior quam priores. Nullo alio istorum modorum trium est corpus Christi in Sacramento sed in cælo: Quia tum feret corpus Christi septipedale in hostia. Sicut ergo corpus Christi est in illa hostia, sic est substantialiter, corporaliter ibidem, et dimensionaliter, attendendo ad modum hostie secundum naturam suam, et non attendendo ad corpus Christi, et ad naturam suam, ut dictum est superius. Et ita conceditur quod corpus Christi est substantia corporalis in hostia consecrata. Sic isto tercio modo in ista hostia secundum rationem qua est ista hostia, sed non secundum rationem qua corpus Christi. Et ita conceditur quod corpus Christi est quantumcunque varie quantificatum ibi cum sit quilibet pars quantitativa illius hostie, et tum non quantificatur aliqua huiusmodi quantitate, et sic est varie magnum in diversis partibus illius hostie, sed non in se formaliter magnum, aliqua tali magnitudine. Sed multi musitant super isto quod sequitur ex ista sententia quod corpus Christi non sit in Eucharistia aliter quam in signo, sic autem est in ymagine crucifixi. Hic dicunt fideles quod corpus Christi non est in celo vel in humanitate assumpta aliter quam in signo, est tamen ibi aliter quam ut in signo. Nam Sacramentum in quantum huiusmodi est signum, et humanitas est signum, cum Luce 2<sup>do</sup> dicitur *quod positus est hic in ruinam et in resurrectionem multorum et in signum cui contradicetur*. Et secunda pars conclusionis patet ex hoc quod alius est modus essendi signum corporis Christi, et alius modus essendi vere et realiter virtute verborum Domini corporis Christi. Conceditur tamen quod isti duo modi inseparabiliter comitantur. Hoc tamen signum infinitum est prestancius quam signa corporis Christi in lege veteri, vel ymagine in lege nova, cum sit simul veritas et figura. Intelligo autem dicta mea in ista materia, secundum logicam scripture, nec non secundum logicam sanctorum doctorum et decreti Romane Ecclesie. Quos suppono prudenter fuisse locutos. Non enim valet scandalizare totam Romanam Ecclesiam quum dicit panem et vinum esse post consecrationem, corpus et sanguinem Jesu Christi, et non obstante errore glosomium ista fides mansit continue in Ecclesia etiam apud laicos. Cum ergo fidelis non optaret comedere corporaliter sed spiritaliter corpus Christi, patet quod omnis sciens aptavit illum modum spirituales essendi corporis sui cum hostia que debet comedi a fidele: Alium autem modum essendi cum foret superfluum abstrahere. Unde infideles murmurant cum illis qui abierunt retrorsum dicentes, *Durus est hic sermo*, cum corpus sit corporaliter comedendum, vel cum illis observatoribus legalium legis veteris qui non putant esse prestanciozem gradum in signo Eucharistie quam fuit in signis legis veteris, vel quam est in

signis humanitus institutis. Et hii fingunt quod accidens potest fieri corpus Christi, et quod melius et planius dixisset Christus hoc accidens sine subjecto significat corpus meum. Utraque autem istarum ex ignorantia graduum in signis est infideli deterior. Teneamus ergo quod virtute verborum Christi panis iste fit et est miraculose corpus Christi ultra possibilitatem signi ad hoc humanitus instituti. Veruntatem ista unitas vel unio sive accepcio non attingit ad unitatem ydempticam numeralem vel unionem ypostaticam, sed creditur quod sic immediate post illam, et sic accidentia corporalia corporis Christi ut quantitatis corporales corporis Christi videntur non multiplicati comitantur ad corpus Christi in hostia, et per idem nec alia accidentia respectiva que fundantur in istis quod omnia ista accidentia perexigunt esse corporale subjecti sui ubicunque fuerint. Ut si hic sic septipedalitas, color, vel substantia corporalis corporis Christi tunc hic est quod corpus Christi est septipedale coloratum et corporaliter glorificatum, et per consequens Christus habet hic existenciam corporalem, quod cum sit falsum negandum est talia accidentia secundum condiciones materiales multiplicari comitantur ad corpus Christi in hostia consecrata. Partes autem quantitative corporis Christi habent esse spirituale in hostia, immo habent esse sacramentale ibidem, cum sunt quodammodo quelibet pars quantitativa istius hostie, et multo magis multiplicatur anima Christi per hostiam secundum quoddam esse spirituale quam est illud esse quod habet in corpore Christi in cœlo. Et causa hujus multiplicacionis anime Christi est quod ipsa est principalius ipso corpore persona verbi. Qualitates autem immateriales quæ subjectantur in anima Christi multiplicantur cum ipsa per hostiam, ut scientia, justitia et alie virtutes animæ Christi que non requirunt pre-existentiam corporalem Christi ubicunque fuerint. Ipse enim fuerunt cum ipso, quia cum ejus anima in inferno. Sicut ergo per totam hostiam est Christus virtuosus; sic est per illam virtus Christi. Unde Autor *de divinis officiis* quod propter esse spirituale corporis Christi in hostia, est ibi concomitancia Angelorum, quia tamen sophisticari otest ista oblatio ex defectu potestatis fidei, et verborum presbyteri ideo <sup>a</sup> me<sup>ti</sup> religiosi adorant conditionaliter hanc hostiam et in corpore Christi quod est substancialiter et ineffabiliter quietati. Sed ydiote remurmurant querentes quomodo corpus est ille panis sanctus cum non <sup>b</sup> sint idem secundum substanciam vel naturam? Sed ipsos oportet addiscere fidem de incarnatione quomodo due substancie vel nature valde differentes sunt idem suppositum et tamen non sunt eedem, quia utraque earum est Christus et tunc possunt a posse non ascendere ad cognoscendum istam miraculosam unionem servata utraque natura non ydemptifica verbo Dei. Sed oportet eos cognoscere gradus in signis, et deposcere infundabilem blasphemiam de fictis miraculis ascendentis, et credere virtutem verborem Christi, et tunc possunt cognoscere quomodo ille panis est <sup>c</sup> bn. miraculose, vere, realiter, spiritualiter, virtualiter, et sacramentaliter corpus Christi. Sed grossi non contentantur de istis modis, sed exigunt quod panis ille vel saltem per ipsum sit substancialiter et corporaliter corpus Christi. Sic enim volunt zelus blasphemorum Christum comedere sed nod possunt. Adducitur autem super hoc testimonium Hugonis de Sencio Victore libro 2<sup>o</sup> de *Sacramentis* parte 8. cap. 7. Quem-

<sup>a</sup> Sic MS.

<sup>b</sup> Sic MS.

<sup>c</sup> Sic MS.  
pro bene.

admodum species illic cernitur res vel substantia ibi esse non creditur : Sic res ibi veraciter et substantialiter presens creditur cujus species non cernitur. Exemplum ad illum Doctorem patet, quia ille subtiliter inculcat catholicam sententiam supradictam, vult enim quod species sencibiliter cernitur ibi, et quod ista species sit essentialiter panis et vinum quod etiam cernitur licet per accidens, ideo sepe vocat ipsum panem et vinum, que sunt alimenta solita et principalis substantia alimenti ut patet in dicto cap. et cap. sequenti. Ibidem autem dicit panem dicit habere rem vel substantiam que creditur non ibi cernitur, cum sit corpus Christi. Sed pro isto adverbio substancialiter notandum quodcumque sumitur simpliciter pro modo substantie sic quod idem sit corpus Christi esse ibi substantialiter, et esse ibi modo substantie. Et sic loquitur Hugo. Quandoque superaddit reduplicative rationem corporis in quantum talis substantia. Et sic proprie intelligo ego adverbia. Unde eodem cap. dicitur quod corporaliter secundum corporis et sanguinis Christi virtutem Christum sumimus in altari. Quod oportet sic intelligi quod spiritualiter sumimus carnem Christi. Et iste est verus modus corporis licet non sit modus consequens corpus in quantum corpus. Quia Johannis 6. dicit Christu *Caro non prodest quicquam*. Cum nec sententia carnalis, nec manducacio corporalis corporis Domini quicquam prodest. Nam insensibiliter sumitur quantum ad formam corporis sui, ut dicit doctor cap. 9, ejusdem partis, sed visibiliter quoad substantiam sacramenti. Unde talis equivocacio facta est in adverbiiis ad excellenciam Eukaristie super figuras legis veteris declarandam. Nostra autem locutio est propria, quia aliter oporteret concedere quod esse substancialiter sit esse accidentaliter; esse corporaliter, sit esse spiritualiter; esse carnaliter sit esse virtualiter; et esse dimensive sit esse multiplicative; et periret modo non distincio. Sicut ergo conceditur quod corpus Christi cernitur vel tenetur in symbolis, vel in hostia et sentitur, quod tamen non sic <sup>d</sup> mo<sup>s</sup> quia non <sup>d</sup> Sic MS. secundum naturam corporis Christi vel in quantum ipsum corpus. Sic conceditur quod corpus Christi est in hostia modo accidentali substantie quia modo spirituali et sacramentali presupponente tres alios modos reales ipsius corporis existere causative: Sic autem non fuit in figuris legis veteris, vel in figuris legis nostre humanitus institutis. Et sic possunt distingui modus prior quo est in celo, et modus posterior quo est in sacramento. Sic autem in tribus discrepamus a sectis signorum. Primo in hoc quod ponimus venerabile sacramentum altaris esse naturaliter panem et vinum, sed sacramentaliter corpus Christi et sanguinem; sed secta contraria fingit ipsum esse vinum ignotum: Accidens sine substantia subjecta. Et ex ista radice erroris pullulant nimis multe varietates erroris. Nam secta nostra adorat sacramentum, non ut panis aut vini substantiam: Sed ut corpus Christi et sanguinem. Sed secta cultorum accidentium, ut credo, adorat hoc sacramentum non ut est accidens sine subjecto, sed ut est signum sacramentale corporis Christi et sanguinis. Signa autem cultus sui ostendunt quod adorant crucem et alias ymagines Ecclesie que habent minorem rationem adoracionis quam hoc venerabile sacramentum. Nam in quacumque substantia creata est deitas realius et substancialius quam corpus Christi est in hostia consecrata? Ideo nisi ipsa fuerit virtute verborum Christi corpus <sup>e</sup> suum, non est ratio tante excellencie adorandum. Tercio <sup>e</sup> Sic MS.

secta nostra per equivocacionis detectionem, et aliarum fallaciarum tollit argucias adversancium, ut aliqua locuntur sancti de sacramento ut panis, et aliqua dicunt de isto non ut ydemptice, sed sacramentaliter corpus Christi. Sed secta adversariorum <sup>f</sup> inculpat difficultates inutiles, et fingit consequenter miracula de operationibus accidentis. Sunt autem ex nostra sententia diffinio summi iudicis Domini nostri Jesu Christi qui in cena noctis sue tradicionis accepit panem in manibus suis, benedixit et fregit et manducare ex eo generaliter precepit, *Hoc, inquit, est corpus meum.* Cum autem daretur panis quem tocians replicavit pro nomine dandi et totum residuum <sup>g</sup> ppo. sigt. illi qui mentiri non potest ipsum esse corpus suum : manifestum est ex autoritate et dictis Christi, quod panis ille fuit sacramentaliter corpus suum. Adducantur autem septem testes ad testificandum Ecclesie iudicis hujus sententiam. Primus est beatus Ignacius Apostolis contemporaneus qui ab illis et cum illis <sup>h</sup> acce a Domino sensum suum, et recitat enim Lincolnensis super Ecclesiastica ierarchia cap. 3. *Sacramentum, inquit, vel Eucharistia est corpus Christi.* Secundus testis Beatus Cyprianus in epistola sua de corpore Christi. *Calicem, inquit, accipiens in die passionis benedixit, dedit discipulis suis, dicens, Accipite et bibite ex hoc omnes, hic est sanguis testamenti qui pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum; Amen dico vobis, non bibam amodo ex ista creatura vitis usque in diem quo vobiscum bibam novum in regno patris mei. Quam parte, inquit sanctus, invenimus calicem mixtum fuisse, quem obtulet, et vinum quem sanguinem suum dedit.* Tercius testis est Beatus Ambrosius in lib. suo de sacramentis et ponitur de consecratione dis. 2. cap. *Panis est in Altari. Quod erat panis, inquit, ante consecrationem jam corpus Christi post consecrationem.* Quartus testis est Beatus Augustinus in quodam sermone exponens illud Luce 34. *cognoverunt eum in fraccione panis: Non omnis panis, inquit, sed accipiens benedictionem Christi fit corpus Christi.* Et ponitur in Canone ubi supra. Quintus testis est Beatus Jeromius in epistola ad Elvideam, *Nos, inquit, audiamus panem quem fregit Dominus, deditque discipulis suis esse corpus Domini Salvatoris, ipso dicente ad eos, Accipite et comedite, hoc est corpus meum.* Sextus testis est Decretum Romane Ecclesie, que sub Nicolao 2<sup>o</sup> et 114 Epist. <sup>i</sup> dectavit prudenter secundum rectam logicam que debet capi a tota Ecclesia, quod panis et vinum que in altari ponuntur sunt post consecrationem non solum sacramentum, sed verum corpus et sanguis Domini nostri Jesu Christi, ut patet in can. ubi supra. Septimus testis est usus Ecclesie que in canone misse habet, *ut hec oblatio fiat nobis corpus et sanguis Domini nostri Jhesu Christi.* Illam autem oblacionem vocat Ecclesia terrenam substanciam, sicut patet in secreto medie misse Natalis Domini. Ista autem septem testimonia sic inficiunt glossatores, qui dicunt tacite omnia talia dicta sanctorum debere intelligi per suum contrarium, et sic negari finaliter cum scriptura. Penset itaque fidelis si sanum fuerit hereticare vel in hoc scandalizare hos testes et multos similes. Penset 2<sup>o</sup> quid tenderet ad honorem corporis Christi vel devocionem populi quod ipsum corpus dignissimum sit unum accidens sine subjecto, quod Augustinus dicit esse non posse, vel si est, est unum vel aliud abjectissimum in natura. Tunc inquam foret <sup>k</sup> Aug<sup>s</sup> meus ut constat hereticus qui in epistola 14 ad Bonifacium de fide Ecclesie ita

<sup>f</sup> proinculcat

<sup>g</sup> proprio  
signavit.

<sup>h</sup> Sic MS.  
pro accepit.

<sup>i</sup> Sic MS.

<sup>k</sup> Sic MS.  
pro Augustinus.

scribit. *Si, inquit, Sacramenta quandam similitudinem rerum earum quorum sacramenta sunt non haberent, omnino sacramenta non essent. Ex hac etiam similitudine plerumque jam ipsarum rerum nomina accipiunt. Sicut ergo secundum quendam modum sacramentum corporis Christi corpus Christi est, et sacramentum sanguinis Christi, sanguis Christi est, ita sacramentum fidei fides est. Ubi planum est quod loquitur de Sacramento* <sup>1</sup> *sc<sup>ntico</sup> quod* <sup>1</sup> *Sic MS.* fingitur accidens sine subjecto. Sed que rogo similitudo ejus ad corpus Christi? Revera fructus illius demencie foret blasphemare in Deum, scandalizare Sanctos, et illudere Ecclesie per mendacia accidentis. Ad tantum quidem Testimonium Sanctorum per glosatores subvertitur, quod committo sensui equivoco quodcumque dictum etiam scripture non facit fidem. Postremo scribit Hyllarius ut recitatur inde *consecra di 2. Corpus Christi quod sumitur de altari figura est dum panis et vinum extra videtur: Videas autem cum corpus et sanguis Christi in veritate interius creditur. Ecce quam plane panis et vinum sunt hoc sacramentum, ut dicit decretum Ego Berengarius. Unde ad delegendum equivocacionem illius materie scribitur ibidem secundum verba Jeronimi, De hac quidem hostia que in Christi commemoratione mirabiliter fit, edere licet. Ubi planum est quod loquitur de esu corporali et distinguit inter has duas hostias secundum substantias vel naturas. Licet panis iste sit secundum rationem alia quam sacramentum ipsum corpus, ut ipse sanctus dicit in Epistola ad* <sup>m</sup> *Elbideam, ut recitatur superius. Et patet quam spissi cultores signorum* <sup>m</sup> *Helvidi.* <sup>um.</sup> *sunt in materia ista heretici. Nedum quia imponunt heresim fidelibus qui elucidant istam fidem; et accusacio de heresi obligat ad penam talionis; verum quia falsificant et sic negant Dominum Jesum Christum. Nam nihil debemus secundum fidem Evangelii Christo credere, si non asseruit panem quem cepit in manibus ac fregit, esse corpus suum: sicut dicit Augustinus super* <sup>n</sup> *p. 66. Si ego quicquam dixero, nolite ex hoc* <sup>n</sup> *Sic MS.* *credere; sed si Christus dicit, re qui non credit. Hec debemus credere* <sup>pro Psal-</sup> <sup>um.</sup> *aliquem secundum Evangelium si non istum. Ideo ve generationi adultere que plus credit testimonio Innocencii vel Raymundi quam sensui Evangelii capto a Testibus supradictis. Idem enim esset scandalizare illos in isto et imponere eis heresim ex perversione sensus scripture, precipue et iterum de ore perverso Apostate accumulantis super Ecclesiam Romanum mendacia quibus fingit quod Ecclesia posterior priori contraria correxisset fidem quod sacramentum istud sit accidens sine subjecto, et non verus panis et vinum, ut dicit Evangelium cum decreto. Nam teste Augustino tale accidens sine subjecto non potest sacerdos conficere. Et tamen tantum magnificant sacerdotes Baal, mendaciter indubie juxta scolam patris sui, consecracionem hujus accidentis quod reputant missas alias indignas audiri, vel dissensientes suis mendaciis inhabiles alicubi graduari; sed credo quod finaliter veritas vincet eos.*

## No. VII.

“We beleve as Crist and his Apostolus han tangt us, that the Sacrament of the Anter white and roud, and lyk tyl oure brede or ost unsa-  
 crede is verray Goddus body in fourme of brede, and if it be broken in

Knighton  
 de Event.  
 Angl. apud  
 X. Scripto  
 res, coll.  
 2649, 2650.



\* easy.

thre parties as the Kirke uses, or eiles in a thousand, everylk one of these parties is the same Goddus body, and ryth so as the persone of Crist is veray God and verray man, verray Godhede, and verray manhede ryth so as holy Kirke many hundrith wynter has trowyde, the same Sacrament is verray Goddus body and verray brede: as it is forme of Goddus body and forme of brede as techith Christ and his Apostolus. And therefore Seynt Poule nemeth it never but when he callus it brede, and he be our beleve tok his wit of God in this: and the argument of heretykus agayne this sentens, \*lyth to a Cristene man to assolve. [And right as it is heresie to belive that Crist is a spirit and no body:] so it is heresie for to trowe that this Sacrament is Goddus body and no brede: for it is bothi togedur. But the most heresie that God sufferyde come tyl his Kyrke is to trowe that this Sacrament is an accident withouten a substance, and may on no wyse be Goddus body: for Crist sayde bewitnesse of John that *this brede is my body*. And if the say that be this skylle that holy Kyrke hat bene in heresy many hundred wynter, sothe it is, specially sythen the fende was lonsede that was bewitnesse of angele to John Evangeliste after a thousande wynter that Crist was stenenyde to heven. But it is to suppose that many seyntes that dyede in the mene tyme before her death were purede of this erreure. Owe howe grete diversitie is betwene us that trowes that this Sacrament is verray brede in his kynde, and between heretykus that tell us that this is an accident withouten a sujet. For before that the fende fader of lesyngus was lowside, was never this gabbyng contryvede. And how grete diversitie is between us that trowes that this Sacrament that in his kinde is veray brede and sacramentally Goddus body, and between heretykes that trowes and telles that this Sacrament may on none wyse be Goddus body. For I dare surly say that yf this were soth Cryst and his seynts dyede heretykus, and the more partye of holye Kirke belevyth now heresy, and before devout men supposen that this counsayle of Freres in London, was with the herydene. For they put an heresie upon Crist and seynts in hevyne, wherefore the erth tremblide.<sup>1</sup> Fay land maynnus voice answeryde for God als it did in tyme of his passione, whan he was dampnyde to bodoly deth. Crist and his modur that in gronde had destroyde all heresies kep his Kyrke in right belefe of this Sacrament, and move the King and his rewme to aske sharply of his Clerkus this offis that all his possessioneres on pain of lesyng all her temporaltes telle the King and his rewme with sufficient grownding what is this Sacrament; and all the Orders of Freres on payne of lesing her legians telle the King and his rewme with gode grounding what is the Sacrament; for I am certaine of the thridde part of Clergie that defendus thise doutes that is here said, that they will defende it on paine of her lyfe."

<sup>1</sup> Ipse Wycliff in 4 libro Trialogi sui ter dampnati capitulo 36. prædictum concilium contra eum celebratum

A. D. 1380. Londoniis vocat Concilium Terræmotus. *Gascoigne Dict. Theo. MS.*



## No. VIII.

*Dr. Wiclif's Letter of Excuse to Pope Urban VI.*Bibl. Bod.  
MS.

I HAVE joyfully to telle alle trewe men the bileve that I hold, and <sup>a</sup> always.  
<sup>a</sup> algatis to the Pope. For I suppose, that if any faith be rightful and  
geven of God, the Pope will gladly conserve it: and if my faith be  
error, the Pope will wisely amend it. I suppose over this, that  
the Gospel of Christ be part of the corps of God's lawe. For I  
beleve that Jesu Christ that gaf in his own persoun this Gospel is very  
God and very mon, and be this it passes all other lawes. I suppose over  
this, that the Pope be most oblishid to the keping of the Gospel among  
all men that liven here. For the Pope is highest vicar that Christ has  
here in erth. For <sup>b</sup> moreness of Christ's vicars is not measured by <sup>b</sup> greatness.  
worldly moreness, bot by this, that this vicar <sup>c</sup> sues more Christ by ver- <sup>c</sup> follows.  
tuons living: for thus teches the Gospel. That this is the sentence of  
Christ and of his Gospel I take as bileve; that Christ for time that he  
walked here was most poore mon of alle both in spirit and in <sup>d</sup> haveing; <sup>d</sup> posses-  
for Christ says that he had nolt for to rest his hede on. And over this <sup>sions</sup>.  
I take as bileve, that no mon schulde sue the Pope, ne no saint that now  
is in hevene, bot in <sup>e</sup> alsmyche as he sued Christ: for James and John <sup>e</sup> as mych.  
errid, and Peter and Powl sinned. Of this I take as wholesome counseile,  
that the Pope leewe his worldly lordschip to worldly lords, as Christ gaf  
him, and move speedily all his Clerks to do so: for thus did Christ, and  
taught thus his disciplis, till the fende had blynded this world. And if I  
erre in this sentence I will mekely be amendid, hif by the death, hif it be  
skilful, for that I hope were gode to me. And if I might traveile in my  
own persoun, I wolde with God's will go to the Pope. Bot [Christ] has  
nedid me to the contrary, and taught me more obeishe to God than to  
mon. And I suppose of our Pope that he will not be Antichrist, and  
reverse Christ in this wiking to the contrary of Christ's wille. For if he  
summons ageyns resoun by him or any of his, and pursue this unskilful  
summoning, he is an open Antichrist. And merciful entent excusid not <sup>f</sup> called.  
Petir that ne Christ <sup>f</sup> clepid him Sathanas: so blynd entent and wicked  
conseil excuses not the Pope here, bot if he aske of trewe Prestis that  
they traveile more than they may, 'tis not excused by resoun of God that  
ne he is Antichrist. For our bileve techis us that our blessid God suffrys  
us not to be temptyd more than we may; how schuld a mon aske such  
service? And therefore pray we to God for our Pope Urban the <sup>g</sup> Sex <sup>g</sup> sixth.  
that his old holy entent be not quenched by his enemys. And Christ  
that may not lye seis that the enemyes of a mon be especially his <sup>h</sup> family.  
homely <sup>h</sup> meinth, and this is <sup>i</sup> soth of men and fendis. <sup>i</sup> truth.

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